

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

Friday, March 17, 2000

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed.

HIS HONOUR J.M. EDGHILL:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Bill before this Honourable Chamber and I would like to commend the Government as well as the Right Honourable Prime Minister for managing the economy in such a way over the last financial year that we had a modest growth of 2.4 per cent. During the last financial year we have also had a relatively small deficit of three per cent and this was 0.5 per cent more than anticipated because of the \$21 million paid to the civil servants as part of the settlement of the eight per cent. This has also resulted whereby there has been a drop in unemployment in Barbados and unemployment is now about 8% which is the lowest ever since these statistics were done.

In this year's Estimates, it is quite clear that the Prime Minister has attempted to reconstruct or replan the economy in light of the global trend which is going to take place by the year 2005, as well as the changes that will also occur when we have our new arrangement with the European Community. In this light, our economy has been reshaped to take better advantage of the services which will occur after 2005.

As a matter of fact, we are going to be facing some great challenges as a result of the liberalisation of trade in this new global environment. If you look back to 50 years ago, you see a post war situation where the industrialised countries have been restructuring their economies while we in the developing world have approximately 10 years or so to reshape or restructure our economies.

In light of this, it is even more challenging for Ministers of Finance in developing countries to get their economies in shape to face the global changes. We must be cognisant of the fact that the countries which are more liable to gain out of this change in the economy are the G7. If you look at the statistics, in 1965 you would see that the G7 countries had a per capita income about 20 times greater than the seven poorest countries in the world. Thirty years after in 1995 that rate has grown by 39 to 1 in just a matter of 30 years so there is a definite shift whereby the countries of the North or the richer countries are becoming richer and better off than the poorer countries or the countries in the South.

We have to take various things into consideration because we also have a situation where in the 1980s the world economy slowed down and is now around three and there is a certain amount of inequality permeating the world economy. We also have a situation where the developed countries which have had

growth in their economies have had problems relating to unemployment because we are seeing growth rates in some of these developing countries but for the people at the lower strata of the workforce we are seeing falling wages and to some extent the people at the lower strata in society are worst off than they were 10 to 15 years ago. So it is very important that we construct our economy in such a way that the people at the bottom will have some part of that trickling down effect so that the disparity between the haves and the have-nots will not be as great as is happening at this stage that, I would assume, is one of the major challenges facing the developing countries like Barbados. We have to restructure continually our economy so that we could maximise the opportunities which will avail themselves, thereby minimising any negative impact which may occur as a result of a downturn in the economy.

Some economists feel that three per cent is a good rate of growth in any economy but I am of the opinion that in order for us to develop and to have that trickling down effect we all have to think in terms of expanding by more than three per cent yearly. It is going to be very difficult for the world to get back to the glory days of 1950 and 1973 when the world economy grew by five per cent. Right now, the world economy, especially in the last decade, has grown by just about three per cent.

We have to cognisant of the fact that we are living in a world in which some of the major economies are in decline. We are living in a world in which there is tumult in many of the world economies. We have had over the last year or so a downturn in the Asian economy and we have also had a downturn even in the North American economy, in Canada, and we have had many declines in some of the big economies in Central and South America.

The major one which would have impacted in a negative way on countries like Barbados is the chaos that took place in the Russian economy because we have a situation now where the World Bank and the IMF have had to put very large blocks of money into that economy and as a result of that there is a fair amount of insolvency in the International Monetary Fund. As a result of that, the Right Honourable Prime Minister decided to go to the Trinidad market to borrow US\$75 million and this I think resulted out of the result of the insolvency in the International Monetary Fund. With all these economies in South and Central America in chaos, money would become scarce so it was a matter of getting US\$75 million up front in case there was any downturn in the Barbados economy so as to cushion any negative impact that would have occurred.

I would like to say a little more about parochial matters but, before I do that, I would like to say that out of this improvement in the economy we have been able to put some money into EduTech which will look after education to such an extent that we would be able to look after the service industry of Barbados, because with EduTech we are going to be looking at putting some more money into improved technology, especially in the information sector which, obviously, will help a lot of the new students coming on stream.

We also have a situation where there were many houses built in the last few years, especially in the last year. Over the last few years this Government has bought something like 30 acres of land which will be able to give us almost 200 house spots. I must say that when we came into office in 1994 we came into office when the Sites and Service programme was virtually abandoned by the Democratic Labour Party and we immediately decided to acquire over 200 acres of land so that we could give land and house spots to people.

It must be recognised that the greatest problem facing Barbados right now is the lack of housing or house spots and this is something this Government plans to address and which it will have to address as soon as possible. I feel that Government needs to move a bit faster in making available house spots to Barbadians. If there are 200 acres of land available, Government should immediately set about cutting up this land so that people in Barbados will be able to get land to build houses.

I know that Government is thinking in terms of building houses but I am not one for Government building houses. I personally feel that the National Housing Corporation should concentrate on giving people as many house spots as possible. If the Ministry is thinking in terms of building, I think it should be in terms of building big buildings, condominium type developments, where people would be able to buy condominiums or rent them. I also think that National Housing Corporation should think in terms of renting some of the house spots which would be derived from these 200 acres. It is true that there are many people out there willing to buy land but we have to look after the poor people, some of whom cannot afford to buy a house spot. I think it is very necessary for Government to think in terms of renting house spots to a percentage of people who cannot afford to buy house spots.

Over the last years we have seen some development even in the Sewerage Scheme. It is true that this is indeed a very big capital programme and it is my feeling that this sewerage project has taken a bit too long to come on stream. This is a project that should have been done almost 25 years ago. I think we started a bit late but I do not think that we are too late although there have been damages to the marine environment in Barbados.

I think all Honourable Members realise the fact that our greatest resource is that of the marine environment so that it is important for us to think of a Sewerage Project for the West Coast as soon as possible. I was told that the bacteria content in some parts of the West Coast, in the sea, is higher than international standards and this is as a result of our being over the last few decades a bit slow in implementing this sewerage project. Governments in the past have not looked at a sewerage project as a very good project, the fact that it is very costly and governments very often think that there is not sufficient mileage to be gained from this.

I feel there is a lot of mileage to be gained from projects such as these. It is up to the relevant Ministry to sensitise the people in Barbados through GIS. You can put programmes on radio so that people will know how important it is to have something like the Sewerage Project going in Barbados.

Over the last few years, especially in the last year, we have had many tenantry roads built in Barbados. This Government is a very caring Government which looks after the well-being of the small people in the country. It is true that some of the major roads are in a state of disrepair, but you must also be cognisant of the fact that over the last few years a lot of money was spent by this administration to make tenantry roads available to a lot of the poor people in Barbados. Sometimes these people had to use plastic bags to get out of their houses to go to the bus stop. As far as we on this side are concerned it is very important to do the little things that matter for the masses of this country.

If you look at policies initiated by this Party over the last five years you will see they had social implications whereby people were the beneficiaries of a lot of policies and plans implemented by this Government

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Continuation of His Honour J. M. EDGHILL:

Sometimes we feel that because of the bureaucracy within the civil service sometimes certain projects take a bit longer than is necessary. Even getting back to the housing project, I feel that it is time that we talk seriously to the Town Planning Department so that when the lands are cut up and people need approval for housing purposes, I think that the Town and Country Planning should be there, willing to do things within a short period of time, instead of waiting some times six and eight months before various things are approved. I think that this in itself is also retarding progress in relation to housing in Barbados.

I think that over the last year or so the Government has done very well. I think that the economy is on a road of sustainable development and in the years ahead, which are challenging, I think a lot is going to be on the shoulders of the Government as well as the Minister of Finance to get things moving and continuously ticking so that people throughout the Barbados society will benefit.

I would like to say that the Prime Minister has prudently managed the affairs of the economy over the last few years thereby resulting in growth. It is true that this year we have had a 2.5% but we must realise that in the last few years we have had very robust growth and some times it will not be always robust but the point is to continuously have that growth. The Prime Minister also feels that as long as the economy would grow in excess of 3% yearly we will actually be on a path of sustainable development and as long as that occurs I think that Barbadians will be able to take full advantage of the situation which would accrue to them. I would like to say that I want again support this Appropriation Bill and look forward to making another contribution further down in the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also give support to the Government's position on the matter before the House. The Estimates, so far as I understand them, reflect a sense of vision in terms of what is projected this year and beyond for the Barbados economy. I think it also reflects the right measure of prudence in the light of the very dynamic environment in which we are forced to live in these days.

In lending support to the Government's position on these Estimates, I would like to make reference to a number of the very critical notions which the Honourable Minister of Finance listed very obviously as the premises for the Estimates which are now before the House for discussion. One of these has to do with the role of the state in today's world. I think we would all admit that good governance in these days is in part very much influenced by a clear understanding of what is the critical role of the state in a developing economy in the global environment of today's world. I think we would also admit further that traditionally the role of the state has been substantially defined by certain considerations one of which is the need for the state to be a principal employer in the context where capital investment is scarce. Another consideration which has served to determine the traditional role of the state has been the need for substantial subsidy in the area of social services in developing economies such as Barbados. The need for a regulator of prominence has also been a consideration that has advised as to the traditional role in a developing economy.

I think that most politicians if not all would admit that another principal consideration which has served to define the traditional role of the state has been the feature of patronage or client/patron relations in our political culture. When the Honourable Minister of Finance, in his presentation made reference to the critical role of the state in a changing economic environment, I looked to the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party of 1999 to see what its platform offered with respect to a suitable definition of the role of the state in today's changing times.

I found no clear definition of the state's role as would be suited in today's developmental needs. I am not here to say that it does not exist in the document. I am simply stating that I was not able to find a clearly defined position on the part of the Opposition which reflected a serious appreciation of the critical role which the state needs to play in today's world.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

In the absence of anything of substance in the 1999 Manifesto we are perhaps forced to look to the record of the Opposition and its record in recent times. The record of the Opposition with respect to their level of appreciation for the role of the state in today's world is one which is characterised by retrenchment in the public sector - memories which are bitter. Memories which still continue until today. Unfeeling retrenchment in the state sector. Three or four thousand people as I understand it, laid off from their jobs in our recent memory by the Opposition when in the seat of Government.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

That is the record. It is a record which is characterised by an unmitigated dismantling of the social services net in this country. Props which over the years were hard fought for and won. Props put in place to protect the vulnerable and those most marginalised in this society. The record speak to an unmitigated attempt to dismantle those secured and social service props in this country. In the absence of any documented appreciation for the critical role of the state we must look at the record and the record of recent times. It is characterised also by the auctioning off of important state assets. Memories again, which are bitter and lasting. That is what the record suggests as the Opposition's level of appreciation for the role which the state must play in the changing environment.

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Continuation of Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY:

Quite the contrary, both in terms of documentation and in terms of record, recent, past and present, is the Barbados Labour Party's obvious clear appreciation for that role and the change that that role must undergo in today's times and the Honourable Minister of Finance more than alluded to this, as I said, it suggested that it is one of the premises upon which these Estimates have been pinned. It is one of the premises which is intended to influence Government's posture on economic matters in an environment of increased competition. Certainly it is clear that this side understands that economies such as ours traditionally have been ascribed a peripheral role in the world's economy.

In the colonialist and capitalist context that was the position of pride in economies such as ours, an existence on the periphery and a context within which these economies were exploited because they were exposed. Government's appreciation, deepens to the point where we understand that there is the obvious and significant threat that in the changing global economic context, these economies can be even further marginalised. And a Government must be possessed of this sense of a threat and be moved to make the kind of response to this type of threat with is both vibrant and viable.

The Estimates of this year being brought before this, House, the budgetary proposals of recent times are reflective of this understanding by this side with reference to these matters.

The objective clearly must be one of strategic integration. Not incidental integration or some form of

marginalised integratedness, if one might put it like that, into today's economy, but strategic integration into a country which is becoming increasing globalized. That is integration to the extent and in the direction that brings the most and best possible benefits to an economy such as Barbados at this time.

What the Honourable Minister of Finance is saying, it seems to me is that the state must play a significantly influencing role towards that objective of strategic integration, being integrated in the economy of the world to the extent and in the direction that brings most and best possible benefits to Barbados and all Barbadians.

Understandably therefore the role of the state is not one which is characterised or ought not to be one which is characterised by retreat, such as we saw in 1991 or thereabouts that a role which must be redefined and made relevant in today's terms, the role of regulator, which is part of the traditional role that even with reference to regulation, the nature of regulation must be redefined. The nature of regulation must be restudied. The role of facilitator that is a role of the state, facilitator of small business, facilitator of medium sized business, facilitator of growth of an indigenous ownership within the context of a developing economy at the turn of this century, the role and very importantly so, of a guarantor of social or socio economic justice and these are extremely important in today's harsh or harshly competitive environment.

As the Honourable Member for St. Thomas suggested yesterday therefore, the establishment of the Ministry of Social Transformation in this context cannot and must not be seen as an accident and must not be seen as a token Ministry by anybody on this side or on that side or outside of this Honourable Chamber. Certainly no token Ministry, certainly no accidental creation and no accidental positioning of the Ministry of Social Transformation and the objectives of the Ministry of Social Transformation upfront on a Barbados Labour Party's platform and Manifesto document, to contract for social change in the people of Barbados.

Marketisation in today's world is a very dominant feature. Marketisation must not be allowed to eclipse morality and when we speak of morality, we speak not so much of it in spiritual or religious or nearly ethnical terms, but we talk of economic morality. Marketisation must not be allowed to eclipse economic morality. Hence the need for a Ministry of Social Transformation to correct any likely developing imbalances in terms of development in this country and benefits derived from that development to ensure that there is a share of the pie for all and sundry regardless of class, colour or creed.

Socio economic justice in my view is a product of a right balance of marketisation and economic morality. If the mix is right, the result is socio economic justice and that is the aim of this Government and I believe one of the reasons why the Ministry of Social Transformation has been established and it seems to me one of the projections behind the figures given in these Estimates before this House.

The Barbados Labour Party Manifesto, in its last platform, now an established contract with the people of this country, speaks to affirmative action for small business opportunity creation in this country. Late last year this Honourable House passed small business development legislation, enact a Small Business Act, 1999. This is standard of proof. This is part of the substance of what in fact appears in cold writing in a document entitled "the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto of 1999." A gender for the 21st Century speaks to benefit for incentives such as the payment of corporation tax at a rate of 25% of the profits of a

business. Exemptions from import duty on plant and equipment imported for the use in a business. Exemption from withholding tax from dividends on interest earned on investment. Exemption on the payment of stamp duty under the Stamp Duty Act, et cetera, et cetera, benefits which clearly help with the development of businesses of this scale, a vital necessity in any agenda for change or for the 21st Century.

The coming of the Fair Trading Commission, I was very much instructed through the presentation of the Honourable Minister responsible for this legislation, soon to come before us. I was not aware that so much work was involved in the establishment of such a Commission and the bringing of such legislation. I am impressed that Government is suitably and the Honourable Minister is suitably moving in the right direction, because if we talk about social or socio economic justice, if we talk about competition in a liberalised environment, you need this type of legislation. You need this type of institutional structure. It is important in this era of open competition. It is also very important in an economic culture which has been traditionally characterised by monopolistic tendency and institutionalised advantage. Clearly to me, there is an understanding of what the state must do to help to move this country forward and at good pace facilitating a development investment culture in this country.

The Honourable Minister of Finance in his last two Budgets or so had addressed this matter ably. I one could see the clear trend, a trend to establish an investment culture in this country. Even with reference to these present Estimates before us Government's financing proposal speaks to a furtherance of this attempt to offer opportunity for investment in this country and to develop the type of culture that would see this country moving away from a situation where we are spenders and consumers, where we become investors and owners in this country facilitating and broadening the base of ownership in this country.

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Continuation of Rev. J.J.S. Atherley:

The Honourable Minister of Finance spoke with reference to this again and this was part of the Barbados Labour Party's platform. It is compact now to the people of Barbados that the base of ownership would be expanded with workers being brought into ownership, with the co-operative sector being brought into further ownership in this country. In his presentation the Honourable Member of Finance made reference significantly to intentions of expanding this privilege of ownership with reference to the Insurance Corporation of Barbados (ICB), if I am not mistaken, and the Barbados National Bank (BNB), all of this underscored and understanding of that very important role. I must press on.

The Honourable Minister spoke also with reference to the notion of strategic partnership which again is critical to the survival in this new and very competitive era of liberalised competition. The Minister of Finance made reference specifically to private/public sector partnership initiative, with reference to

the Grantley Adams Airport facility. Contrary to what the Honourable Member for St. John, the Leader of the Opposition suggested, I specifically have the recollection of hearing the Prime Minister suggest that it would be the commercial activities, with reference to the Airport, that would be privatised and that matters of security and processing would remain the province of the Government. I am quite satisfied with that. I would also have some concerns as to any light to be shed, to our security by such an arrangement but I think with prudence this is a matter which can be easily handled.

The notion of strategic partnership is very important, both at the regional and international levels. It is important for survival but certainly to serve the objective of Barbadian entities having an impact on the presence in regional and indeed in international markets both for products and services.

I would like to make reference to an example which perhaps have not been much spoken of but spearheaded by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas in his capacity of Minister of Home Affairs. This has to do with strategic partnership between the Barbados Postal Services, if I understand correctly, and the British Post Office.

Quite unlike the Trinidad experience this is not a situation where we are getting into a colonial style arrangement where the New Zealand Post now runs the Trinidad Postal Service and going into Grenada. With an effort to retrieve Grenada from a situation of total chaos in order to ensure that there is a continuance of the universal post in that country. There is a strategic arrangement between the Barbados Postal Service from a position of strength with the British Post Office based on the realisation that this is the way we must go in a changing context.

The objectives in part would be to establish Barbados as a mail-hub for the Caribbean for British postal mail from Europe and North America. To explore possibilities from trade agreement with South Africa, which would perhaps see Barbados being used as a first stop for the package of mail between Africa again and North America. The objective which would be served as well would include joint capability for joint tendering on business ventures.

I like the scenario of the changing world which confronts us in that there is going to be growth in a number of the public sector entities which are involved in delivery services. We are going to see increasing numbers of private couriers even here in Barbados, coming in especially at the high end of this service and offering speed services. We are likely to see increase numbers in home deliveries. We are already faced with the development of electronic commerce and the potential which that has to bite into an area of service which traditionally has been the province of the Postal Service. In spite of the challenges which these will bring, of course to the postal service, one wants to look beyond as well and see the increased opportunities which would be created by such developments. I think the establishment of strategic linkages, of that, to which I just referred are critical in responding to that type of situation.

Very quickly I would like to allude to the matter of the capital programme. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition spoke in negative terms on the fact that construction activity is one of the drivers of the Barbados economy at this time, but even as he spoke and called for reduced taxation to the tourism sector, I think the Honourable Member would have to admit just like anyone else would have to admit that the construction activity ongoing and which is now a driving force in the Barbados economy is in part, and largely so designed to improve our tourism sector.

It is designed to ensure that our hotel plant is suitably designed to respond to today's demand and today's needs. We are talking about the sort of bridge we must have if we are to hold our market share and even expand that market share. We are talking about an economic activity that provides employment for a significant number of persons, nearly 1 300. This is a process which is sustainable because it is being well-managed. This is not ad hoc capital activity. Government has been fairly well constrained in this regard and must be given a long applause for its management of this particular sphere of economic activity, well remembering that coming up to an election year, the Prime Minister in prudence, rather than expand the capital programme of Government, constrained himself with Government with reference to that, quite contrary to what we saw in 1990-1991. The honourable Member for Christ Church West Central was careful to remind me that the Government at that time sought to ensure that he remained ...

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Precisely so. We are talking about economic activity which is well-managed and well-advised. We are talking about the development of an infrastructure in these very critical years which must be made suitable to the needs of an economy which is becoming increasingly service-oriented and service-based.

The Prime Minister traced the dialectical movement. I was honoured to hear him do that. I remember doing a similar thing in the budget debate of last year. The dialectical movement from an agrarian society through live manufacture to now a service-oriented economy without the benefit of any robust experience in industrialisation in this country. So this economy must be made suitable to the needs. We cannot condemn sewerage development and infrastructure. We cannot criticise airport expansion. We cannot criticise institutional modernisation and strengthening. We cannot criticise or condemn efforts to enhance ourselves technologically, in terms of technological capacity. This is where we are going. Our infrastructure must be brought up to speed to respond to these needs.

Very quickly I want to get a little bit more parochial. I note the expenditure in the Estimates with reference to capital works related to the Lester Vaughan School as well as the St. Leonards School. I am particularly concerned about the St. Leonards School and certainly any money spent in relation to the St. Leonards School would be well spent.

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Continuation of Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

I want to stress that not only is attention to the St. Leonards School long awaited and very much appreciated but more certainly the achievements of the school. I want to underscore this. The

achievements of the institution merits the attention which Government has given thus far and which Government proposes to give to the St. Leonards School.

This is a school which has excelled in sporting activities. It is not known by many that for seven straight years the St. Leonards under 15 football team has won the under 15 football championship. For five straight years, they won the under 13 football competition and this is without a playing field at the Richmond Gap facility. They have done exceedingly well in under 15 and under 19 cricket. They have continued to do well in basketball, hockey and chess.

I am told that in terms of results in music at this time that they enjoy some 90 per cent success rate. In woodwork - 100 percent. In metalwork - 80 per cent. In technical drawing - 70 per cent. Many of these boys have gone on to become architects and draftsmen. We are talking about the last all boys secondary school in Barbados.

They won top prizes for community projects with respect to various spheres such as motorised swing, water use devices and non commercial compactors. We are talking about a school which is not mentioned when we talk about schools of prominence in Barbados, yet, they have been achieving. I am here to say that the achievement merits the attention. Their exploits and successes in Spanish on the academic side also need to be noted. These things need to be lauded.

The presence here of the Honourable Member of St. Michael West Central, the Honourable Minister of Public Works and Transport, who is a product of this school is testament that this school is contributing to the development of this society in significant ways.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about recent reports of mal-administration and the very sour atmosphere existing at the school. This has come to the fore in the Press and certain information has reached me which I would not want to delve into. Whether totally accurate or if only partially accurate, it paints a very dark picture of a turf war being waged in the administration at the school. If this is allowed to continue, I am sure that the only casualties will be the boys of the school and this society in its national context a few years later. I have every confidence that the Honourable Minister will ensure that those responsible will address this matter, and suitably so, because it is a very serious situation and we will anticipate speedy, necessary and suitable address.

When the capital works were ongoing at the school I held the view, and I think it is a view which is gaining currency in the seats of Government here, that the community around the school should also be enhanced. We have problems with housing of very poor quality in the immediate environs around the school which adds to a negative atmosphere which impacts on the school. We have situations where people living in poor conditions have common walls to the school itself. That is a situation which cannot be allowed to continue. There is also an inadequacy of roads and other social amenities.

I am hoping that when the capital works of phase II at the St. Leonards School are pursued in earnest that arrangements would be put in place for enhancing the communities of Richmond, Goodland and Alkins Land in the immediate vicinity of the St. Leonards School.

This school has a hard court facility. It seems to me to be a simple matter to put in some lights so that the boys of the community might be afforded the opportunity of play beyond 5:30 p.m. in the afternoon.

The hard court already existed. It should not be too hard to get lights in there and keep these boys off the street and away from violence.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy questioned how these Estimates will impact upon the small man. In the last minute available to me, let me quickly suggest that there is no legitimate impetus for mobility in this country from our experience like education. I see \$45 million here listed to be extended through the EduTech programme for this year.

We have a situation where Barbados needs to go to the next level in terms of education. We have the development of an educational system of culture in this country which was started by the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) - I think the very St. Leonards School was one of the institutions in the early days - and expanded by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and then radically modernised again by the Barbados Labour Party (BLP). Now it is time to take it to the next level. I think an expenditure like this in a programme such as EduTech 2000 will take it to the next level.

In relation to social infrastructure, \$69 million is allocated to the Ministry of Social Transformation to help the marginalised, the vulnerable, the unprotected, the elderly, the disabled and those who are most affected by poverty in this country. This is money to be well-spent. On January 20, 1999, the people of this country voted and said that the Government's social programme designed to alleviate poverty and stress of that sort in the society was money well-spent.

In relation to housing, \$7 million in acquisitions to come. I hope the Minister for Housing would remember that there is land available, contrary to public view, in Manning Land, Strathclyde, Passage Road and Goodland in the constituency St. Michael West. I look forward to seeing those areas listed next time the Honourable Member has something to say about housing.

Then of course there is the business of agriculture. I do not have the time to read it. There are market and fishing facilities.

I thank you.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

Mr. Speaker, I have held the view for sometime that the Estimates debate should really be the debate that is broadcast in its entirety to the public of Barbados. I have held the view too that perhaps we should rapidly consolidate the process where the Budget and Estimates are presented at one and the same time. It would give us the opportunity of clearly demonstrating to the public not only how we have spent their funds during the last year - that is the element of accountability - but also how we intend to raise funds for the supplies of the country and how we will be spending those funds in the year to come.

More important, one of the things that has been supremely achieved during this Estimates debate is that we would give them an overview of where we are positioning Barbados in the challenges that are confronting developing countries as globalisation and liberalisation takes place.

The Government can take strong comfort from the very careful, incisive and rational analyses made by the Leader of the Government, by the Front Bench, by the Back Bench and by the Party as a whole of

the world economy, of the regional economy, of Barbados' domestic circumstances and of the challenges which confront Barbados in the future.

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Continuation of Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

In the 1970s, the Americans always said that Barbados was fortunate to have a Cabinet and a Government of the calibre that we had in the Labour Party. Today, that statement can be repeated without contradiction because the Opposition Leader can be well satisfied that his challenge to the Front Bench has been answered head on, and has been answered with fact, with analyses and with solutions. This is not a Cabinet, as he says, that needs to be turned on their heads and shaken up. Had the public the example of listening to the outstanding speech of the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and the speeches of the members of the Front Bench, I think the public would recognise that this is a Government, that although it outnumbers the Opposition tremendously, is exercising power responsibly.

I want to say this, Sir. What struck me most in the statement of the Leader of the Opposition was not his lambasting techniques, but his almost tacit admission, in fact, his expressed admission, that Barbados is not falling out on economic performance. Now, Sir, that must be taken as a congratulation for the manner in which the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and his Cabinet have managed this economy.

When he came on to deal with the issue of the challenges, he made this statement: "Barbados is not falling out on economic performance." Those were his exact words. Unfortunately, he spoilt it by saying "But at the level of ministerial performance." That must be a contradiction in terms. In fact, it is not only a contradiction in the sentence he has made but it is certainly a slap in the face for the other spokesman on economic affairs who speaks in the Other Place on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, I have had the very difficult task, as indeed the Leader of the Opposition now has, of leading a depleted number in a House of Assembly. It was probably one of the hardest tasks that has confronted anybody in political life. There were only three of us here and two above but we did not need the Press to put our case for us.

We were the Opposition. We do not need the Press to believe that its role today is to be the Opposition. Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I believe the Honourable Member forgets that after the 1986 election the Nation newspaper boldly declared that with the

Opposition so depleted they would take it unto themselves to perform the role of the Opposition outside of Parliament. That was on the front page of the Nation newspaper.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

I think the Honourable Member is probably reading what he has seen recently in the paper. I think what he is also hearing is from some of the spokesmen, including the private sector, who now believe that the Honourable Member has turned his colleagues so much on their heads that there is nothing left but for them to try to build back the party for him.

Let me go back and say this, Sir. We were the Opposition and three blind mice, as they called us. You go back and read that period. We were able to defend the people's rights in a constructive manner in this House. We came in with facts where there were real instances of corruption, like CARSICOT, which still haunts us, like dope in the diplomatic bag. This country forgets quite easily. When we came in with those matters we came in here with facts, not with suspicion. More often than not, when we came in and warned the country about the difficulties which were going to face the economy at the time, we did so from a position of integrity and knowledge.

I remember very well being ridiculed both inside and outside this House when I warned that the IMF would have been at our doors in 1991. I remember the then Right Honourable Prime Minister, Mr. Erskine Sandiford, and the Honourable Member as Minister of Finance, throughout the country asking me to produce a document, saying I was lying. Now that is how we did Opposition. We did opposition in this House constructively based on factual analyses. We did not come into the House to lambast in a way in which there was no basis for the criticisms which we made.

I wish the Honourable Member well. He has a hard task but, perhaps, he can learn from the example which we set him back in the period of 1991 to 1994 and 1986-1993.

Aside.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

He has a fear that they will get rid of him, not the interest of the country. He is sotto voce in his seat saying, you want them to get rid of me.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, I was in my seat but I was reflecting on the fact that ...

Mr. SPEAKER:

On what do you rise, Sir?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

On a point of order. After all the hard work which the Honourable Member alleges that he did, his group decided to get rid of him and all he could say was that he had stomach ulcers as a result.

Mr. SPEAKER:

No point of order, please.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

Mr. Speaker, let him say that.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Let us proceed, please.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

I am not going to be diverted on the personal thing but I just want to say this to him. He has had a year of fighting for fear of people getting rid of him and he has been, to them, so unelectable that they have had to leave him. I have never seen such a mass movement of people away from a political leader as from him.

I will ask the Honourable Member to realise that under me we were able to rebuild the party, that although the then Prime Minister spent the highest amount in capital expenditure \$240 million in 1990-91 to win an election, only 1 500 votes separated us.

When the history of Barbados is written, the Democratic Labour Party will know that one of the things that any great leader can do is to see when to provide for his successor and what an admirable successor I have left for the Barbados Labour Party to lead it, so much so that if the Honourable Member doubts me, not only did we cast them out in 1994 but also the people gave them the punch of all times by turning them on their heads, 26 to 2.

It took some years for it to work through, Sir. But I wish the Leader of the Opposition well because this Government believes that true democracy in this country can only be retained and adequately maintained where all views must be expressed and we must listen to all opinion.

11:10 a.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. SIR HENRY FORDE:

We have listened to his opinion but, unfortunately, a lot of his inferences and conclusions do not agree with the facts. Eight years of consistent growth in an economy is one that very few countries can boast of. It puts us almost on par with the USA with the consistent growth that has occurred.

Unfortunately, it is leading some people to assume that because of that they can achieve everything within the space of one year or within the space of one term. I believe that the Government has outlined very carefully the challenges that are confronting it. I am not going to repeat what the Prime Minister and others have said because repetition is not argument and my time does not allow me to do so.

I want, however, from my perspective as someone with a little knowledge of international affairs and international relations to comment briefly on this issue of globalisation. Mr. Speaker, we need to educate and inform the public of Barbados much more on what is happening within the industrialised and bigger economies and of their plan for dominating the world's economy to the detriment of developing countries. What we are going to begin to witness is a transfer once again of wealth from the underdeveloped countries to the developed countries rather than an equitable distribution of the world's resources.

I can understand the Americans positioning themselves for the challenges from China. The Americans are so well ahead technologically that they are placed to survive as the leading power for the next 25 years and possibly for the next 50 years. They are afraid of the growing strength of a market that is well over a billion people, with a vast amount of resources, with a political system that allows it to drive its people - we cannot drive ours here - in the way it wants to go and which will inevitably become a giant of the future.

How do they position themselves, not only technologically but in terms of their business dealings? One of the things we have to be careful of is that in going into organisations such as the World Trade Organisation that we are putting strongly the case for the developing world and particularly for small states.

The Government of Barbados has recognised that. I do not see that point being emphasised for our people daily but we have a leader who has been playing an outstanding role in recognising the dangers posed for our small states and trying to ward off some of those dangers and position Barbados so that it will continue to move forward and probably achieve the next more difficult task for us, moving from being a middle income developing country into the third stage of a fully developed economy with all signs of excellence in every endeavour in its day to day domestic and other affairs.

I want to say to Barbadians that we must not believe that we can achieve that status without some sacrifice. We have come between the 1930s and the year 2 000 to a stage that has taken developed countries well over a century to achieve. We have done this because we had the faith in our people and we were able, despite various discriminatory practices in Barbados, various distinctions, to run a country efficiently. Does it not tell us a story, that between 1930 and now the working class people have been

able to progress this country to an excellent stage? Look around in this House as you look around in most of Barbados and ask how many of us, if any at all, grew up with a silver spoon or any spoon in our mouths.

When I hear the people outside talking negative things about politicians, I ask them to reflect on the standard of leadership they have had in this country, how we have managed to hone the skills of our people in order to improve the quality of life of Barbados. I say to the middle class, and I talked about this a lot during the last election, Barbados has had one of the fastest growing middle classes anywhere. The middle class has expanded in 50 years at a pace that is not matched by places like Russia, by places like Cuba, by Latin America. The middle class must now shoulder its responsibility. It has to learn to give back. It has to show its responsibility. There is too much negativity coming from the middle class and carping criticism of the Government without any constructive action on their part, particularly a lot of the professionals, and without any urge to sacrifice.

Sure, we have problems in this country like anywhere else, but ask the middle class people who are making the noise and dominating the call-in programmes how many of them leave their homes on a Saturday and go to the Garrison and watch, as the Honourable Minister for Social Transformation and I do, the over thousand young fellows playing football across racial barriers, across the barriers of class. Some children have to travel from Silver Sands on the minibus and sometimes they do not have the money to pay to get there as against those middle class people in our country who can only criticise and try to destroy.

11:20 a.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

I feel very deeply on this. This will be my theme for the balance of this session in this country that people have to take on responsibility. If the water goes off for a day you will find the first person who is going to run to the paper about it is a middle class person. If you are rebuilding as we are rebuilding the roads and making things better for them, the first thing that you see is somebody's picture, a middle class persons in the paper talking about the road and how the dust is coming. It really amazes me. When we take the money as we did last year, we had to make a conscious decision to help those poor people who had to change two pairs of shoes including people in Society in the parish of St. John. We had to give them road that they have never had before.

I hear people who are driving around in their BMWs and all of the modern cars, fully air-conditioned, quarrelling about the roads are bad. They have never known that the road in Old Navy Roads were

never anything but mud tracks. They have never known that. None of them have know that. Those people who could afford to have three meals a day and go in the clubs do not know that we have people in our constituencies like in Bonnetts and the Ivy who have not got a meal sometimes a day. They do not understand that. I do not want to hear when they are bombarding me.

You have the problem of crime. I talk to my constituents and I say to those who are on the Club Morgan and Rendezvous Ridge, I am going to help you form a neighbourhood watch but I want you now to go down into Bonnetts where you are telling me that you are getting the pressure and crime from the boys in the block and give a couple of hours to teach them. Spend some of the money, instead of spending it on cocktails, on helping educate one of the children. That is what I ask them to do.

Asides.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

That is what I ask them to do. To spend some of the money and take the young eight and nine year boys and form football clubs. Spend some of the money and come into the Bonnetts Resource Centre and put computers in them so that the old ladies could learn the computers to help their grandchildren when they come home.

Asides.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

Spend some of your time I say to them and come and help teach. Do not write foolishness in the paper about how the offshore sector is doing nothing. You have the expertise in your company. Send it out there to help the people. That is what we want to tell them, Sir.

I have dedicated my years to political life with all the misrepresentation they give me but I am proud to be a member of a party that has always understood social justice and equality.

Asides.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

Mr. Speaker, where else in the world - ask yourself if we are honest in this country - that a Party can bring legislation before this House to make people sell to the old persons who parents and grandparents work for hundreds of years in the sugar plantation, to sell land at ten cents per square foot?

Mr. SPEAKER:

Do you really want me to answer that?

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

Do you want to hear about the social transformation? Come up in Society where I live, Sir, and you will see that the people up there and in Colleton are still buying land at ten cents a square foot to build houses on and see the transformation that has taken place. Under the Barbados Labour Party 6000 tenants were enfranchised. You are talking about enfranchisement? Six thousand people were enfranchised in that way. I believe that over 4000 conveyances have already been granted. You can still buy land at ten cents per square foot for house spots because of the Barbados Labour Party.

A lot more than that, Sir. This Barbados Labour Party Government has continued that same policy of equity in this country. I am not one of those who go about mouthing the poor black man in the way that the Honourable Members do it. We are performers; we are not talkers. In my constituency which is made up of a large number of tenancies, Mr. Speaker, Sir, today the Government has started implementing policies not only putting roads, water and light where none were before but giving the old ladies wall and indoor toilets.

Mr. Speaker, you know how it hurts my heart that in Barbados in year 2000 you can still see homes in which old ladies in their 80s have to go out in the yard in order to do what is normal? I ask the middle class Barbadians who can talk so much and criticise so much and do not make the sacrifices, what has anyone of them done to help one of those old people?

They are driving in their cars. They have every place with wrought iron, they are cocooning themselves and do not recognise that they have a duty to society. There are the people on whom an Opposition that is not responsible can easily prey. That is why we have to be careful when we see the attacks on the Government to stress that we have a mission. We must never be deflected from the mission of the Barbados Labour Party to social justice and a cohesive society. We must never be deflected from this.

The Prime Minister is a living example of the accomplishments of Grantley Adams' dream.

Asides.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

That is what he is. That is for history to say. He is a living accomplishment, Sir.

Sir, I want to say to the Cabinet to continue to do the good job that you are doing and to the Prime Minister, continue to lead in the way that you are leading because your historical performance and role will be recognised. Not when you are dead. We are going to teach them enough that they recognise even in your lifetime.

Asides.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

The Honourable Member for St. John says that there are some special problem. I have never heard an Opposition talk more of waste than this Opposition. An Opposition that wasted the Government's assets to bring us to our knees at the hand of the IMF. An Opposition that came in here and cut the civil servants salaries. Now, what morale authority do they have...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is accusing the Democratic Labour Party of taking this country to the IMF and is giving the impression that it was the Democratic Labour Party that first took this country to the IMF when in truth and in fact, it was the Honourable Member who was part of the Cabinet when the country first went to the IMF and destroyed the economy. It was the Honourable Member who was the Attorney General at the time.

Mr. SPEAKER:

What is the point of order.

Hon. Sir. HENRY FORDE:

The Honourable Member is full of fundamental. He is the leading buffoon in Parliament today.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

Sir, the Honourable Member in his last moments in Parliament is now behaving like what he should have done for twenty years. After protecting the interest of the private sector in this country he has suddenly recognised that he has a role to the poor people. I am grateful to him.

Mr. SPEAKER:

What are you objecting to, Sir?

11:30 a.m.

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Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

The Honourable Member must know that Shakespeare always had leading roles for people like Falstaff, and that therefore he should not be ashamed of playing that role in his Party, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

When the Honourable Member is finish, I will continue my speech, Sir.

I ask what moral authority has the Democratic Labour Party got who has destroyed the jobs of civil servants and sent them home, civil servants, taken their pay from them, what moral authority does the Democratic Labour Party have today to come and say that the Barbados Labour Party could have paid it back and furthermore to say that the civil servants do not want to take the money, other than in cash.

If I was leading an Opposition, my position would be to come in here and urge the civil servants and all of the persons whose money was taken away to invest that money for the future, because unless we invest more in Barbados, unless we invest more in our own country, we will not put our economy on a safe level.

Sir, I want to deal with one or two of the allegations in the limited time available to me.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Yes, it is limited.

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE:

I want to deal with the National Insurance, Sir. I was very pleased to see that the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister acknowledged that there is some improvement taking place in the national insurance position and that we are taking steps to ensure that people will have their pensions secured beyond the year 2012.

Let me say this, Sir, about the national insurance. We are still owed approximately \$80 million and I guess tither against those people who work, particularly the professionals, and do not pay into national insurance but are the first to run up for non contributory pensions. We cannot have that in this country.

Secondly, I get bitter with people who do not realise that they have a responsibility and they do not only have rights and we must stress the responsibility. I am happy to say that the National Insurance Fund is now of the value of \$1.1 billion.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE:

The actual figure as at December 31, 1999 was \$1.09276955902 million and I want to deal with the issue of its investment because the Honourable Member implied that we were recklessly investing the funds at Warrens.

Sir, the investment portfolio shows that we hold 4.15% in treasury bills; .47% in fixed deposits, external; 51.46% in debentures; 13.17% in fixed deposits. In equities local and regional, 4.47%; in development bonds 9.69%; in treasury notes 12.80%, in equities international 1.38%; loans 1.68% and real estate .73%.

We have been making funds available to the Housing Credit Fund as we should. It is the workers' money, as we have made available to the Barbados Workers' Union in the past. We have been making funds available to the General Workers' Fund and we intend to make \$10 million in two tranches, one of five at the end of March and one thereafter. But we have lent on the Government's offices which are being built at Warrens.

Sir, the Government spends some \$9 million a year in rent and the purpose of Warrens is to provide Government space and to take away from having Government offices in substandard buildings, sometimes in private sector places.

Sir, there is an income strain to pay back that loan. There has been a problem encountered but instead of the Democratic Labour Party getting the problem right, they want to throw mud and scandalise. The problem is standardised. The problem there is that based on the engineering plan, the contract was awarded. As they went down and dug, they found they were in a cave. Now happened already in Barbados at the University of the West Indies (UWI). It has also happened to Barbados Shipping and Trading Company Limited. I have not heard the Opposition come in here and talked about what happened to the building that Barbados Shipping and Trading had, where they now have all their cars.

They encountered the same engineering problem. They were able to put a raft in order to have the

foundation. They are using the balance for storage. Now, the Government if it is right and takes advice, would use the extra space, coming from the cave in order to bring in more income and to correct the problem.

Obviously there will be cost overruns. But it is being made to appear as though the Minister of Housing has done something corrupt or wrong in this country and people are only prepared to listen to rumors rather than analyse fact.

Sir, the investors helping with that project, the Life of Barbados, the Barbados Mutual, CIBC and the National Insurance Scheme and none of these investors are going to lend money likely, unless they are satisfied that the project is viable.

Mr. Speaker, I am only able to speak on that. I will revert to others, except to say that when the Opposition make allegations about lambasting and wastage, they should be based on the facts so that the people can judge. We must not in this country speak in the sort of pejorative language and make the insinuations that by themselves will create instability and instability that could be worse than that of the boys on the block with guns and violence.

Mr. Speaker, I am indebted to you.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to bring the debate to a close assuming, Sir, that the debate has not effectively already been brought to a close and my role now is largely to guild the lily, Sir.

I really must begin by observing that I am very pleased that the House has had a very full discussion on the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill, Sir for two reasons, Sir. There is a mystification in Barbados about what constitutes the Budget debate. And ever since Errol Barrow brought budgetary proposals in a black box in 1961 there has been the feeling that the presentation of Budgetary Proposals at the time of the laying of the Financial Statements is the budget. The facts, Sir, we are dealing with the Budget today and this week. The Budgets are the Government's projections of its expenditure and Government's projection of its revenue. This is really, Sir, the Budget debate. What happens if the Minister by way of discretion chooses to bring...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

This is the Budgetary process and it is very important that the entire Parliament participates in this fundamental debate that pertains to the expenditure for next year as well as our projection of revenue. I am very pleased, Sir, that all Members of the House have spoken in what essentially is your real Budget debate.

The second reason why I am pleased, Sir, is that there has been some concern expressed in certain quarters that would have led us to believe that the economy was off track and that we had to rethink

policy and that we had to face deep structural problems. I believe that the evidence induced in this debate, Sir, have laid that second issue to rest and perhaps that is where I ought to begin in responding to the matters that have been raised in this debate, Sir.

11:40 a.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur:

I am satisfied that the Government has properly done what a Government must do in a budgetary exercise, that they have clearly set out the fiscal strategy of Government. We have clearly set out, Mr. Speaker, the financial programme of Government, how Government intends to finance its Government,. We have clearly set out the strategic objectives that have guided us in developing what is fiscal policy as well as the financing policy. We have set out, Sir, the allocated choices the Government had thought it had to make, explain what lies behind those schemes and we have indeed demonstrated, by way of explanation how the that ewe are asking the House to approve will assist as it will undoubtedly do, Mr. Speaker, in keeping Barbados on a path of orderly and sustained economic growth and development within the context of fiscal stability, a sound external position and with due regard for the enhancement of social justice in this country. If I may remind the House, Sir, our fiscal policy is guided by the precept that our deficit should not exceed two and a half per cent of the GDP.

The Budget that we are presenting to the House for approval has been cast within that context, Sir. There has been no contradiction offered of the fiscal policy of the Government. We have also, Sir, spelt out the financing policy in relation to how we propose to finance the deficit, highlighting the fact that we propose to rely upon savings and hence savings bond debentures figure more than in the past. In so far as we cannot now draw from the World Bank for confessional loans, we will be rewarding the market, Sir, and that we will be using budget loans to finance it in large measure.

There has been no contradiction, Mr. Speaker, about the soundness of that financial policy. May I say in that respect, Sir, that today the Central bank of Barbados is to provide me with the analysis of all of the tenders that have been made by persons in the international capital market about a placement of US\$100million by the Government of Barbados on the market and today, I will be in a position to make a choice in relation the source from which we will be raising the US\$100 million. There has been no contradiction of that. The Government has been clear to set out our foreign requirements as you have to do if you are presenting a budget and how those borrowings will be raised.

I extended bond requirements in the context not just in the need of Government to raise capital for its own purposes but to boost reserves in anticipation of further localisation and today as we said, Sir, the Central bank will be presented with an evaluation of the eight bids that the Government has had presented to it to raise US\$100million. We have to do it now, Sir, because as the House knows, the interest rates are inching up further and likely to inch up and we should go now that interest rates are favourable and we have a good credit rating.

I also discussed, Sir, the various allocations prescribed by the Government and how they coincide with

our need to build a post industrial infrastructure or actual human resource development. I emphasised in my presentation, Mr. Speaker, how our choices as regards priorities to be met and focus on things such as enhancing the environment and building the private/public sector partnership. That too, Sir, has not been contradicted. I really have to leave this debate on the presumption that the development strategy of the Government, the fiscal policy, the financial policy, the Government's policies in relation to the allocation of expenditures as between various functions and Government's borrowing policies have all received the concern of Parliament, and that they have done so because these various things are sound.

Sir, I am also leaving the debate with the understanding that the House is clear that even though we did experience some turbulence last year that the Barbados economy is not only now on a very steady course, Sir, but that it is performing now in the first quarter better than anticipated. From time to time, I suppose the economy will go through some turbulence. There is nothing that any Minister of Finance can do to avoid encountering turbulence. It must be the same way, Sir, that a pilot cannot avoid experiencing periods of turbulence. The thing is how you take it, how you take the craft, Mr. Speaker.

We institute measures last year to defend the balance of payments. We institute measures last year, Sir, to boost savings and the indications are that they are bearing fruit, although I do not want to cause the country to be lulled into a sense of excessive optimism. We were being told by the Opposition spokesman that the situation now in Barbados is worse than in 1991 and that there was the expectation that the government would have had to exceed, and lawfully so, its overdraft limit to the Central Bank. Men who class themselves as professional economists, a man I should say, Sir, stakes his professional reputation upon the fact that by March this year the overdraft limit would have been over \$160 million, and that what happened last year with the reserves was indicative of a crash in the external position of Barbados.

If I had misled the House in this debate it would have been to understate the extent to which there has been a discredited improvement this year. I am now in possession of the most recently available information, Sir. Between December 31, 1999 and March 15 of this year, the net foreign reserves from the Central Bank have increased from \$613 million to \$706 million an increase of \$93 million. For the corresponding period last year, Sir, between December 31, 1998 and March 15, 1999, the reserves increased by only \$300 000. This year the increase has been \$93 million reflecting a substantial increase in the tourism industry, but also reflecting the wisdom of Government's early efforts to safeguard the balance of payments by putting in place measures to stimulate savings and to control expenditure. These things, Sir, do not happen by chance. What matters is how you steer the craft through the turbulence, Sir.

As regards the overdraft, Sir, which in the opposition's spokesman's view, test of Government's financial sobriety, we have brought the overdraft from a hundred and whatever it was, Sir, to zero and it has been at zero for some few weeks, Sir. So the prediction that the Government's finances have crashed because the overdraft had reached astronomical limits which were likely to increase, Sir, has been proven to be nothing but a false prophesy.

As we said, Sir, the financial market has improved in Barbados, whereas last year we faced the problem of under-subscription of treasury bills, Government's treasury bills issues have been oversubscribed and the underlying fact in that, Sir, is that there is an increase in deposits as Barbadians are responding to the urging of Government to increase savings. Of course this is one quarter's

performance. I do not want to lure the House into a sense of false optimism, Sir. We have to sustain it but the reality is, Sir, as I said, we will be raising \$100 million on the market. There are strong capital inflows associated with major projects that are taking place. The tourism sector has picked back up again, Sir, and I see no problems with the balance of payment on the horizon but although we will continue to manage it judiciously and I will not want to hurt either the Government or the private to believe that there should be an irrational bout of expenditure to deplete the country's reserves. We can leave the House satisfied that the country has gone through the mild turbulence, we are back on a steady course. It perhaps explains why there was a certain tone and tempo to the contradiction of the Opposition.

Before I say that, Sir, I really must thank all my Members who have spoken in such great strength in this debate, Sir, but I must single out a member. Members must forgive me but I thought the Minister of Commerce was outstanding in his contribution, not only outstanding in his contribution, Sir, but he is an outstanding Minister. It is not often in the history of Barbados that a Minister taking a portfolio for the first time is able to bring to the Parliament three major new pieces of legislation on important issues in the course of fifteen months. We have had the Small Business Development Act brought to this House, Sir, but I don't think the House quite understands what is involved in trying to bring a Trade Fair legislation to the House -

going through the process of developing the policy, having the national consultation, developing the policy paper, and then going through the drafting exercise and bringing all of that to the House within 15 months.

The last person who should have criticised the Member for St. Michael North is the Member for St. John because he was the Minister of Finance and he had more than two years to bring the VAT to the House. He had the advice of a financial guru who left the Central Bank to come to the Ministry of Finance to help to put the VAT in place, Sir and after two years he could not bring the VAT legislation to the House, Sir. He knows the difficulty he had in bringing the Insurance Bill to the House. The Member for St. John as Minister of Finance never brought any major new legislation to Parliament, and it is a little unfair for him now to be so harsh on the fact that within the period of 15 months the new Minister has brought important new legislation that will change Barbados forever.

I want to stress the point, Sir. We have established a commission of competitiveness that is functioning and will oversee the implementation of the single market and all other things, Sir, but Barbados can only be truly competitive if we reduce the transaction cost of doing business in this country. A large part of the transaction cost of doing business has to do with the cost of utilities and the cost arising from monopolies. The Fair Trading Commission will perform a vital role, not only just in establishing conditions just for domestic competition and building a virtual market in Barbados, Sir, where there is a tendency to monopolies, but it is going to perform a massively important role in helping to establish the conditions for us to build a truly competitive economy in Barbados, to the extent that its provisions will ensure that the transaction costs that arise from telecommunication and Light and Power and natural gas and others bear a relationship both to domestic efficiency but are comparable with cost and prices obtaining in the rest of the world.

I really want to congratulate the Member for St. Michael North for having within 15 months put this country in a position where this longstanding matter can now be dealt with in a most enlightened way.

Sir, the Opposition has a function to perform in a democracy. The Government must not feel that it must be free from criticism. I believe that a responsible Government must expect that an Opposition is going to bring deficiencies to its attention and would expect that those deficiencies have to be addressed. I say that, Sir, because I have a view of life that mortal man will always make mistakes and a government in which thousands of decisions are being made will from time to time make mistakes having to do with an exercise in judgement.

The way in which my Cabinet and my Government exercise is that we recognise that from time to time mistakes will be made but where they are made we will acknowledge them, pick up the pieces and go forward. I say that because what struck me in this matter, Sir, is that a lot of the things that were being raised by the Leader of the Opposition are things that the Government did not need to have the Opposition to tell it about.

11:55 a.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

We took action to correct the situation not because of pressure from the Opposition because we believe that the best laid plans of mice and men would sometimes not be realised. Things can go off track but Government must be sensible enough to recognise that we can make mistakes and if we make them we must acknowledge them and deal with them. I say that because that is my view of how Government should function.

I am encouraging all Ministers to believe that if a mistake has been made, they should acknowledge it, do not cover it up, face the fact and at least be honest enough to have the evaluation and make the correction early as it has been with housing.

The Government has a housing programme in place called Settlement 2000 in which judgements were exercised that would have caused the programme to respond to a demand in the society for acceleration. Members of Parliament have come to this House and said that the greatest pressure they are facing in their constituency offices is the demand for house spots and houses. It is a fact.

The National Housing Corporation (NHC) has tried to compress a programme that was intended to take place over a longer period of time into a shorter period and in many respects has over committed itself in relation to the resources available to discharge its responsibilities. Sir, that is a problem more of judgement. It certainly is not a matter of corruption. The Leader of the Opposition has not been able to

adduce corruption. He has said that we are carrying out a housing programme at a faster rate than has been anticipated.

Sir, the Ministry of Finance sent in our management accounts almost a year ago. Once the matter came to our attention, we did a comprehensive review and as Minister of Finance, I require my Minister of Housing and Lands to send me four separate analyses of all the problems. I have had extensive meeting with housing officials and we have put in place there a programme to put the housing policy and programme back on track.

The Government now is executing in a structured way the implementation of a housing programme taking into account in a balance way the needs of the public of Barbados and the resources available to the housing sector to reconcile the needs with the delivery of programme. It is on track.

I make the point that if the people of Barbados had to depend upon the Opposition to defend their interest long after the fact then the people of Barbados would have been lost - short change. The weakest argument advanced by the Leader of the Opposition during this debate was that he had the information from November but did it not see it fit to speak to it. The Government had the information and we have acted upon it. This leaves one to conclude that if the Opposition is going to continue to do this, not wanting to participate in the Constitution Review Commission debate even after they had the report in hand for fifteen months and not wanting to keep the Government on its toes but is leaving the Government on its own initiative to correct its own mistakes, then perhaps the conclusion has to be drawn that we have an Opposition that is drawing money under false pretence.

Sir, there was an aspect of the Opposition's presentation that was not worthy of a debate when the big issue is how we are going to be seeking to reposition the Barbados society. The Leader of the Opposition does not like to present facts. In fact, he has a difficulty when he is forced to present facts. What he does, is hint darkly at things. It is a technique, I suppose, which plays well because it plays to an emotion with the public that all politicians are corrupt. He casts dark hints about politicians that touches a sympathetic nerve with the public.

It is easy to come to the House and say that private companies owned by the Government are not presenting reports to Parliament and therefore that is unaccountability. A critical Press picks up that and runs away with it.

The fact of the matter is that Statutory Boards of institutions owned by the Government established under Statute are specially required to submit their reports to Parliament. Companies established by the Government under the Companies Act are not so required. The fact that they do not, does not mean that they are unaccountable to Parliament nor does this suggest that there is anything dark about their functioning.

The Honourable Member for St. John more than anyone else should have been in a position to know that this is so because as far as I am aware the only two companies that he ever established as Minister of Finance were two companies under the Companies Act and none of them has ever submitted a report to this Parliament nor has been required to do so, that is true. There are the Barbados Agricultural Management Company (BAMC) and the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust (BACT).

To hold up to the public the notion that because Government companies functioning under the Companies Act are not submitting reports to Parliament means that they are unaccountable, Sir, is there such a need out there for the public to draw an inference based upon two things that are not connected.

This Government has by way of the Loan Guarantee Companies Act of 1988 introduced legislation in the House that has sought to put the borrowings of those companies, in instances where they require guarantees by the Parliament, within the context of legislation for the first time.

The last act of the 1994-1999 Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Government was to put on the Statute Books of Barbados, a new piece of legislation that says in instances where companies in which Government has the majority shareholding want to borrow with Government guarantee, it has to be brought to Parliament. A limit on the amount has to be set at \$250 million to a point of accountability established and that the loan guarantees themselves has to be made subject of documents produced on the Floor of this Parliament.

In relation to the GEMS Project, the value of what the GEMS has already created at Savannah, at Time Out and at Silver Rock has already been assessed as vastly exceeding the debt raised to create the value. We are getting value for money. The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) was not in position to say so for CARSICOT, St. Joseph Hospital or none of the others.

If the Honourable Member for St. John has something or feels that there is something wrong about the GEMS Projects, he should stop hinting darkly about it and produce the facts.

Sir, I am in a mood to speak about the production of the facts because without quarrelling I want to produce some facts today. The Honourable Member for St. John spends too much time trying to find a way of explaining what cannot be explained.

On October 15, he signed an open letter to the Prime Minister of Barbados that said at page 2:

“It was noted by the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) committee that in the financial year 1997-98, your administration paid over to the Barbados Sugar Industry Ltd (BSIL) more than \$240 million for three sugar factories, two of which may be closed and become scrapped iron worth less than \$1 million.”

That was stated as a matter of fact, that we paid \$240 million over the Barbados Sugar Industry Ltd (BSIL) in 1997 for three sugar factories, two of which were scrapped and not worth \$1 million.

12:05 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

What are the facts? The facts are that in 1994 under the Democratic Labour Party there was an arrangement put in place where the debt owed by the sugar industry that was on the books of the BNB was taken over by a new company formed called the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust. Among that debt, Sir, was an amount of \$138 million representing the amount that the Barbados Sugar Industry Limited as an institution owed the Barbados National Bank. In return for that, the Government of Barbados issued the National Bank \$250 million in Treasury Bills, but that is not the issue.

The issue is that as a result of the policy of the Democratic Labour Party in 1993/94, the debt of the sugar industry, and in part the debt of the Barbados Sugar Industry Limited to the extent to \$138 million, was taken off the books of the BNB and put in a new Government institution called the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust. The BNB was taken out of the picture, the Agricultural Credit Trust held the debt and there had to be the expectation that the debt would have to be paid. You can pay for a debt in two ways, out of your cash earnings or if you have assets, and your earnings are not enough, you have to take those assets and use them, or use the assets as collateral against the debt, so there would have had to be the expectation when the Agricultural Credit Trust was made to take up the \$138 million that the Sugar Industry Limited would have to pay back the \$138 million. How, Sir? Clearly not from cash because the BSIL was bankrupt, had no cash, and there was no projection of an income stream to pay back \$138 million while keeping it going, so the debt could only therefore be redeemed and realised from the value of the assets that were being transferred.

Now, in 1994 when the debt was transferred from the BNB to the Agricultural Credit Trust, there was no value attached to the assets of the Barbados Sugar Industry Limited. By 1997 those assets that constitute the collateral underpinning the \$138 million in debt owed by the BSIL to the Agricultural Credit Trust were valued, and the assets of the BSIL that were to be assumed to be taken over in return for the debt have been specified.

The Leader of the Opposition has staked his political reputation on the notion that we have paid \$240 million for three sugar factories.

Now, Sir, I would like to read to you what are the assets that they are taking over, not to liquidate \$240 million but \$138 million. I want you to tell me if this sounds to you like only three sugar factories. The assets are worth \$80 million, Sir, and they are set out in a Schedule that is an agreement signed and dated October 1977 between the Sugar Industry Limited and the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited. The Sugar Industry Limited is called the transferor and their businesses are to be transferred to the BAMC which is a subsidiary of the Agricultural Credit Trust and the businesses are defined in the Second Schedule to this agreement.

“‘Businesses’ mean all those certain lands, factories, buildings, equipment, vehicles, machinery, fixtures and fittings particulars of which are set out and referred to in the Second Schedule to the Lease.”

I would like to refer to what they are, Sir.

Andrews Factory, 19 778.41 square metres of land abounding thereto;

Bulkeley Factory, 29 490.55 square metres and land attached thereto;

Porters Factory and all the commercial land that can be used for valuable commercial purposes attached thereto.

There is also land belonging to Porters Factory in Mount Standfast, St. James that is separate and distinct from the factory. That is also part of the pot.

Portvale Factory and the 38 4/10 acres attached thereto;

Haymans Factory and all the land surrounding it and attached thereto;

Carrington factory and all the land surrounding and attached thereto;

Foursquare factory and the land surrounding and attached thereto;

Lands at Warrens, 2.145 hectares;

Land at Edgehill in St. Thomas, 1.688 hectares;

(10) Vaocluse House 2.956 hectares;

(11) Land at Grandview in St. Thomas;

(12) The Barbados Molasses Terminal Limited - 3 100 square metres and the buildings and lands attached thereto;

(13) All the property of the Sugar Terminal Ltd. - 13 313 square metres;

(14) The Sugar Transport Ltd. and all of the vehicles and so on involved therewith.

Then it says, Sir:

“It is hereby agreed that there shall pass to the Transferee under this Agreement certain other property and premises belonging to the Transferors, the accurate descriptions of which are at the present time unascertained.”

There is some question about title deeds, Sir. They did not have proper titles to properties and some people are living in the house.

The point I am making, Sir, is this that the amount of the debt involves not \$240 million, but \$138 million. The assets are not only three sugar factories, two of which are condemned and worth nothing, but the whole list of things that I have just read out valued at \$80 million and could possibly have a market value of more. You are talking about land at Portvale, Mount Standfast, Vacluse and others so that the information that has been put out as fact that we paid over \$240 million in return for three old sugar factories, Sir, can begin immediately to explode as the lie that it is.

The second point, Sir, is that not a penny is to be paid. First of all, Sir, the transaction has not yet been completed, so when the Honourable Member for St. John said that it was paid over in 1997/98, is four years in anticipation of any transaction taking place. When the transaction takes place, Sir, it will not be a money transaction. All that will happen is that the BACT, as I said, holds the debt. The Barbados Agricultural Management Company which is a subsidiary will operate the assets of the sugar factories and so on so the assets as I have described them of the Barbados Sugar Industry Ltd. will be transferred to the BACT. The debt held by the Credit Trust owed to it by the Barbados Sugar Industry Ltd. will be taken off the books and all that will take place is that an account receivable in the name of the BAMC will be entered on the books of the BACT.

12:15 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

It will be a simple money transaction, a basic transaction. Not a penny will be passed. The transaction will simply be a relationship between the Barbados Agricultural Management Company which is a subsidiary of the Credit Trust and the Credit Trust itself. The Credit Trust is holding the debt. The assets of the Sugar Industry Limited will be transferred to the management company and it will be a simple matter of the matter being brought to account once the arrangements can be finalised by an accounts receivable being created in favour of the Credit Trust in the name of this account.

Sir, the member for St. John tried in this debate to defend the nonsense that we paid \$240 million for the land. When, in fact, Sir, he should know that what is involved is not the transfer of three sugar factories from the Sugar Industry Limited to the Credit Trust but everything that they owned, all the buildings, all the trucks, the terminals. There is a perception that was created that we wickedly did this as a means of putting cash in the hands of the BSIL to help finance the campaign.

What is wicked about this, Sir, is that the member for St. John came to this House yesterday and tried to find some kind of way to create the further misconception that wickedness was done. I will tell you where the wickedness was done, Sir. I have to tell you the facts.

The wickedness was not done by us. The wickedness was done in the closing days of the 1994 experience of the Democratic Labour Party. I would have already walked this House through day by day what the Honourable Member for St. John was doing in the closing days of the Democratic Labour Party in relation to transactions involving Bushy Park, in relation to their seeking from him concessions for a golf course. What I have never told the House, Sir, is that while he was dealing with them in the closing days of the Democratic Labour Party, when the DLP was behaving like how the Iraqis behaved when they were leaving Kuwait, destroying everything in their path, I have never yet before told the House what were the other arrangements that were being put in place to allow Bushy Park to have access to lands that were committed in support of that \$138 million of debt that was transferred from the BNB to the BACT to allow it to have access to that land at a ridiculous price. Sir, I have a constitutional responsibility to tell the facts and I shall do so.

A letter on May 18, 1994 to the Managing Director of the Barbados National Bank, re: Sale of Bushy Park Plantation. It starts

“We are in receipt of a Release drawn up by the Attorneys for Forster Hall Estates Limited ...”

Forster Hall Estates were the original owners of Bushy Park and they owed the Barbados National Bank money for it. That was part of the estates intended to be passed over to the BACT which were to be the collateral for the \$138 million in debt passed over. They were in receipt of a Release dated May 17, 1994 from a Mr. Carol Fields, Attorney at Law. I do not know the legal profession too much, but the Honourable Member for St. John perhaps knows who Carol Fields is better than I, and I suspect, Sir, he is more familiar with his Chambers than I could ever be.

The document, Mr. Fields stated inter alia that agreement has been reached for the sale of the property at US\$700 000 plus US\$50 000 towards the payment of land tax arrears. So for \$1.5 million Barbados

dollars Bushy Park was sold.

Let me go on:

“As you are aware, ...”

This debt on Bushy Park was assigned to the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust.

“At the time of assignment ... the debt stood at \$2 919 723 and interest has continued to accrue since then.”

So, Sir, in the closing days of the 1994 episodes of the Democratic Labour Party, a plantation that was being transferred to the BACT on which there was a debt with a principal of \$2.9 million and interest accrued not specified was allowed to be sold to the Bushy Park people for \$1.5 million. This, Sir, 347 acres of Barbadian land was allowed to be sold by an administration, that says that foreigners now should not own land in Barbados, to the Bushy Park developers for an amount equal to half of the debt owed by the estates to the BACT.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what thereafter ensued was a saga that I hope never has to be replicated in the history of Barbados. The public officers were so shaken by this transaction that they felt an obligation to state it on file in letters. The Chairman of the BACT, to his credit, Mr. Goodman, wrote the Director of Finance and Planning in these terms.

“Our concern rests principally on the substantial quantum of the liability which has had to be written off and we wonder whether it might not have been more appropriate for the BACT to seek to develop the property for resale as residential lots.”

Three hundred and forty-nine acres of prime Barbados land was being sold for \$1.5 million. Then the Director of Finance and Planning wrote in these terms:

“I share your concern at the large write-off which was accepted by the BNB. ... The BACT has been established to work out the indebtedness to the Government that the sugar industry accumulated through the BNB....

... This Ministry has on file a request for numerous concessions related to the proposed golf course villa and hotel development on the Bushy Park Plantation site. The sponsors of the project, in seeking these concessions indicated that they were prepared to invest \$344 million.”

A foreign investor has \$344 million to invest in Barbados. There is a plantation that he wants to buy in Barbados. There is a debt on that plantation of \$3 million and more. That debt is held by a government institution that has to recover the debt to protect the taxpayers. The man has \$344 million to spend. Do you think, Sir, that the first thing the Government of the day would have ensured was that the \$3 million or the land would have been covered? But a man with \$344 million to invest in this country was allowed to buy a plantation on which there is a debt of \$3 million and more, for \$1½ million. Gone away, Sir, laughing at the taxpayers of this country. It is a wicked thing.

Since 1994, every year my Government has had to be servicing the debt that was transferred, the Treasury Bills that had been transferred to the BNB, pulling the taxpayers' pockets when, in fact, we should have had some of that money from the Bushy Park developers. Of the \$344 million to invest, a large chunk of it should have come into the treasury to help service the debt.

I want us to cut a contrast, Sir. Yesterday I had permission for \$6 million in BACT funds to be transferred to a Below the Line Account in the Consolidated Fund to be used for the purposes of financing the Agricultural Development Trust.

12:25 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000.

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

I have given a commitment to the Agricultural Development Trust to help save Barbados' agriculture and part of the funding for it will come from the sale of those lands - \$6 million. I can tell the House, Sir, that in every instance under this administration where plantations have been sold through the BACT it has been by way, Sir, not of any secret deal but by way of public auction.

Sir, Alleyndale we sold for \$3.5 million. The net proceeds of that was \$2 million. We sold it for \$2 million more than the debt. In every instance, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have made sure that what we have gotten for the sale of the estate have been more than the debt that the estate owed to the BACT so that there can be a net proceed rather than give away the Barbadian people's land. The Honourable Member for St. John by introducing this issue has a lot to account for.

He must tell us first of all, Sir, since the Barbados Labour Party was not the Government that initiated the transaction between the BSLI and the BACT. If you took over debt from somebody of \$138 million, how were you going to satisfy yourself that that debt was going to be paid? If you took over debt of \$138 million and the assets were only worth \$80 million, how were you going to ensure that the difference was met outside the context of accepting a write-down of the value of the debt? If the institution is bankrupt and does not have anything other than the value of its physical assets, once you have recovered on them, to seek to recover anything else means that all that you are going to be doing is paying lawyers fees and administrative cost to recover nothing. You have nothing else to recover but the \$80 million so at some stage if you have accepted a debt from someone of \$138 million, and they have assets of \$80 million and have nothing else, that you would have to agree to a write-down of \$58 million dollars.

Implicit in the Democratic Labour Party decision of 1994 was a commitment to write down some of the debt and that is all we are doing now. If the Honourable Member for St. John knows of any mean by which you can force a company that is bankrupt to have money to pay outside the context of selling its property, he must tell us because we do not know, Sir. All we can do now is to take the assets that they have and try to get as much for them as we can because we are holding a debt of \$138 million that he left us to redeem.

Sir, I wish I had to deal with Bushy Park. Sir, 348 acres of land was allowed to go to Bushy Park for \$1.5 million is just slightly less than all the lands that the Government of Barbados had to acquire over the course of the last five years to provide house spots for the people of Barbados. If the Government of the day knew that there were going to agree to move Bushy Park from agriculture to other purposes, Sir, it should have been guided by the precept that, let us at least try to get the very best economic returns for this country from making that transaction.

How on God's earth can you allow a man to come to Barbados and to make a fortune of two sets of things. One is to buy Barbadian land at half of what the debt was on it, Sir, and then to be able to benefit by the grant of planning permission where others could not get it, a casino licence and a range of concessions that bore no reality whatsoever to things that had been granted before.

Sir, I have to speak to these fact because the Leader of the Opposition makes it necessary for me to put the facts on the table, Sir.

We will not pay any \$240 million for any sugar factory, Sir. The transaction has not yet been finalised because there are still matters pertaining to titles and people living in these properties to be resolved. When the transaction is finalised, Sir, not a penny will pass. It will be a simple book transaction in which the BAMC will take over the assets, the BACT will write off the debt to the BSLI and accounts receivables will be created in the nature of an accounts receivable by the BACT from the BAMC. That is all that will be involved, Sir.

The Government is being pilloried for implicit corruption on the strength of nothing more flimsy than that.

Sir, I must speak in these terms because the Leader of the Opposition has a political style. He would not join us on policy but he believes that some day he will hit a very big bonanza.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

He feel so, that some day he is going to come across some matter of corruption and that by exposing it, it is going to break the back of this Government. We have seen it starting with the secret deal with the IMF. That was intended to break the back of this Government, Sir. Then it was the Kola Syrup, Sir. It has gone on and on and on. Sir, I say that I would urge him to come out from that style of politics because once I am in charge of a Government, Sir, that Government will from time to time make mistakes but there will be no corruption by this Government once I am in charge of it. There cannot be, because politically I am never going to give him a cause. He may wish, if he want to, Sir, to stay where

he is. That is, spending a whole political career doing what no other Barbadians politician is doing, week by week using columns and letters to destroy the character of other Barbadians politicians, Sir. Week by week just being like a sore, searching for muck to throw at people. He can either stay there, Sir, or he can come and start dealing with the fundamental issues facing this country that this country has to be re-positioned. It is going to require bold decisions, some will be painful decisions but we have a responsibility to reposition and we have a responsibility to explain why we have to do it for the people of this country.

Sir, I am disappointed that in this debate that he rather chose that approach which more fits his political nature rather than stick to the approach which I think, essentially, for the sake of the Democratic Labour Party he has to come to, because the Democratic Labour Party Members have left because they say he has no morale minimum and he wants to stay in that mode where he just throws things at his opponents.

Sir, the Government will make mistakes. We have made some. We will be honest when we make them and we will correct them but we cannot arrogantly believe that we are perfect. The National Housing Corporation was one but we did not wait for the Opposition to correct it for us, we corrected it ourselves. I urge all my Ministers who were under attack from the Leader of the Opposition that if they make a mistake to acknowledge it. Do not believe that you are perfect and let us find the way to correct it - avoid corruption.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this House deserves better. I really have to speak in these terms because my own personal integrity has been put in doubt by the statements of the Leader of the Opposition when the facts say otherwise. The whole Government has been put in doubt and the time has come when politics must come to a high level in this country. If it does not, Sir, I can then write the biography of the Honourable Member for St. John "A Search for Smut". Sir, I hope it does not come to that.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Sir, let us rise about it. There has been nothing improper that has been done by the Government of Barbados in relation to transactions of the sugar industry. Nothing at all. We have a debt of \$138 million that we must redeem, we have assets that collaborate them, we valued the assets, transferred the assets to the company that owed the debt to try to minimise the loss on the \$138 million. That is all we are doing. That is what the public has to be told. The BLP is to be set up as a victim now that we have \$240 million to a weakening sugar industry in return for three bankrupt factories. Sir, that is madness.

Sir, the Government's financial programme has not been contradictory. I will leave this Parliament with the conviction that there is support for the fiscal policy, financial policy, strategy, priorities and choices. I have said to the House that we are going through a delicate period with the international economy. We went through a period of turbulence, we have stabilised the economy and it is on the up again. I cannot say there will never be any turbulence but I will give the House the assurance that if it is, the Government will do what is necessary to keep Barbados stable.

It is in the context of those assurances, Sir, that I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS seconded by Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

12:35 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

HEAD 24 - MINISTRY OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION \$66 071 501

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I was in the pavilion padded up for a long time just waiting on my time to bat in this wicket. Sir, I have been observing this wicket which has been very fast and furious. I noticed that sometimes the ball is outside the off stump that the persons get caught at first slip and some people play very defensive with the bat and pad very close together, Sir.

Sir, I would like to lighten this debate by asking the question, do you swear to tell the truth and nothing else but the truth, Sir help me, God? I would like to say, Sir, that the bottom line of this debate is a matter of truth and nothing else.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would want to take this opportunity to thank this Honourable Chamber for allowing me the privilege to participate in these Estimates debates, particularly since so much emphasis has been placed on the Ministry of Social Transformation over a prolonged period of time, Sir.

Last year, Sir, our Ministry was allocated a sum of approximately \$59 million. This year, we were

granted \$66 million, an approximate increase of \$7 million. This clearly shows in my view, Sir, Government's intention to assist in the fight against poverty and other social illnesses within our society.

To this end, Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister, firstly, Sir, for his vision, his initiative and desire to eradicate poverty and to empower those marginalised and groups of persons across Barbados.

However, Sir, I would not want any of us to believe that because there is an obvious increase in the vote for this Ministry of Social Transformation that all of the social problems in this country would automatically disappear by the next financial year. I would also like to remind all Honourable Members who are present here that I have always said that the development of this country cannot and should not be measured only in terms of dollars and cents. I was following the debate very closely and I want to say at this point was alluded to by other Members who spoke before, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation is obviously the youngest in Government right now and I dare and I want to make this point, Sir, anyone in or out of this Chamber to identify any person who was granted help primarily because of political persuasion. This Ministry is not about that. This Ministry transcends all political boundaries and certainly it is not my nature to function like that.

In addition, Sir, the only people who are given preference in the Ministry of Social Transformation are the poor and those in need of someone to present a case for them. It was like that in the days of Jesus Christ and I want to remind Mr. Chairman, Sir, that approximately at 7:00 p.m. my Sabbath will step in, but it will not stop me from talking here today, and it remains the same way today.

Sir, I remember when I first - and I want to go back because in order to understand what I am going to be discussing throughout the course of the day, I must set this Honourable Chamber on a solid foundation of understanding exactly what I intend to do and how we have to struggle in the Ministry of Social Transformation. Sir, when I was first allocated this Ministry of Social Transformation, some rather negative comments were made about the Ministry and myself and I, Sir, find some of them very amusing.

Firstly, a man offered me a lift along with the Honourable Member for St. Michael and we did not have any transportation and he got on the back of a truck and went through Ivy looking at houses, Sir, looking at problems, trying to deal with them. The next day I saw in the newspaper, "Hamilton Lashley and Trevor Prescod on the back of the truck, this is what social policy is all about in Barbados." I could not believe it, Sir. The story did not say, but subsequent comments from other persons made reference to that. In addition, Sir, it was a nice picture of me. I have to compliment the artist. The artist has a nice picture of Hamilton Lashley behind a car driving. He has some nice girls and referred to me as the Minister of Social Transportation.

Sir, it is quite obvious that anybody who knows Hamilton Lashley well that I cannot even ride a bicycle properly far less drive a motor car. I have two intentions. I want to complement the artist for one thing that he did draw some girls in the picture in the are and not boys.

Asides.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

Sir, I did not see any intellectuals, the so-called elite of bourgeois in this country who refer to the Ministry of not having a macro policy, Sir, but I will get to that later in my presentation. I would also issue the macro and micro policies of the Ministry.

12:45 p.m.

Friday, 17 March, 2000

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, in the light of all this I would like to especially thank one of the Senators, Mr. Branston Collymore, who at that time in the Senate, made Barbadians aware of the fact that when you are given a new Ministry, there is difficulty in trying to get that Ministry established. I think the story was carried by Ona Harewood in the Nation Newspaper.

I was surprised that some people would behave like if this Ministry was in existence all the time or like if the Prime Minister, Owen Arthur said look, give 'Hamila' that Ministry. Sorry, Sir, I hope it is not unparliamentary but that is my nickname. By the way, Sir, I got that name when I was in school, when they were trying to identify the leader of Nigeria who at the time was Sir Abu Bakr Tafawa Balewa, and the only person who could remember the name was me. It was so long that they said we will call him 'Hamila', so that is how I got the name. So if we are going to enter it, let us enter it into the book now because it is truth that we are dealing with in this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, some people believe that the Prime Minister gave Hamilton Lashley this Ministry as a compliment. Sir, let me say this. I was doing social work or was involved in social work for well over 25 years. I did not even know it. I suppose at that time they could have referred to me as the de facto Minister of Social Transformation. All that has happened now, Sir, is that the Prime Minister has appointed me to this Ministry of Social Transformation, not through favours, Sir, but I believe he had the wisdom to know that I would try my best to do a good job.

Sir, I want to remind this Honourable Chamber of an old Barbadian saying. It says when goat 's'-but I would say 'd' dung-wants to roll it rolls up hill and I know there is a saying that there is none so blind as those who cannot see. I want to say, Sir, that there is none so blind as those who do not want to see. There are people like that. There are people who are not visually impaired but they just do not want to see. Sir, I listen to the critics and I just try to keep focused on the mission that we have set out, Sir.

The Leader of the Opposition say that the Prime Minister should take the Ministers and hold them by their feet and give them a good shake out, Sir. That is what we would term on the block 'dust them out, I think that is what he is referring to. If anybody holds me by my foot and shake me out, the blood is going to rush to my head and then I do not know what I would do, so I would urge nobody to touch me

because I feel comfortable with the relationship with myself and all Honourable Cabinet Member concerning the work we are doing at Cabinet level.

Sir, a new Ministry like a Ministry of Social Transformation obviously would need a lot of assistance, particularly from the view of pushing the right ideas, the whole philosophy, the policies and the programmes of the Ministry.

Sir, there are some people who all of a want to begin by say 'Do not give Hamilton Lashley any more publicity. He is getting too much publicity, all kinds of things, like it is Hamilton Lashley. It is not Hamilton Lashley. It is the Ministry. It is a mission. It is a system that has been set up to help poor people. These things have no effect on my duties because some of those who would have benefited from the Ministry of Social Transformation are the ones to speak loudest, Sir. They know it and they know that I know it. They know that I know what benefits are to be derived from the Ministry. Sir, like everything else such is the nature of politics.

I would like to add, Sir, that the day I, Hamilton Lashley, cannot leave this Ministry free from the shackles of politics, I would humbly return to Pinelands, St. Michael Barbados and sit down on the Parkinson Community Centre and chill out with the boys, but I cannot do that. It must be stated that the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in a moment of comfort but where he stands at times of challenge. I am going to repeat it again because it is to be borne in the minds of Barbadians that I am very serious and that I am focused and that all of the innuendo and slurs and all of accusations cannot move me. I am like stone wall Jack. I repeat it, the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moment of comfort but where he stands in time of challenge. This is very important.

Now Sir, I want to get down to deal with the Ministry of Social Transformation. I want to begin my preamble this way, Sir. There is this talk about macro policy. I want to explain to all Honourable Members here in Parliament that one of the first thing that happened in the Ministry of Transformation is that recently a Parliamentary sub-committee on social policy was established by the Prime Minister to help the Ministry. This sub-committee is chaired by Senator John Williams. The members are the Honourable Joe Edghill, the Honourable Member for St. James South, Liz Thompson, Senator Broome, Senator Pat Symmonds, Senator Jessica Odle and Mr. Rudder. This is within the Party's grouping.

In addition to that, even more so importantly, Sir, a sub-committee of Cabinet on social policy, Sir, was established. Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation would act as the Secretariat, which would also involve its technical person. That sub-committee of Cabinet includes the Ministry of Education, Health, the Attorney General's Ministry and also the Rural Development Commission. This sub-committee meets every first Monday of the month.

In addition to that there is a broader policy that is being revised not only for this Ministry but for the entire Barbadian society. This broader social policy is still in its embryonic stages, Sir, and it is being prepared by the Ministry and the United Nations Development Programme. I want to take this opportunity, Sir, to congratulate and thank the staff working at UNDP offices for their kind assistance to the Ministry of Social Transformation.

I want to put at rest one time about this foolishness that you don't have a policy, or what is the broader social policy; like if only the intelligentsia in Barbados are the ones who are given a God-given right to

talk about policy in this country. We have to understand, Sir, in order for a ministry, a critical ministry, like the ministry of Social Transformation to go forward we must set a solid foundation.

There are persons in this Ministry who work morning, noon and night. It is a Ministry that has caught the imagination of Barbadians. Some of them out of curiosity and some out of utter political ideas, but Sir, as I state my mission onward from here, I want to begin first by saying everything that I say from here onward, Sir, I am going to make a document of this Honourable Chamber, lest we forget that the Ministry of Social Transformation has a set of programmes. It has a solid policy and not only that, it has a fundamental philosophy. I would ask your permission to go ahead to make this a document of the House from which I could quote extensively.

Sir, I would first like to begin by giving a background, an the executive summary of the Ministry of Social Transformation. The Ministry of Social Transformation was established in January 1999. Sir, let me pause at this point to say that this Ministry is less than one year old. I think all Honourable Members know that Government's financial year really starts April 1. I know that it is not April 1 yet. Since it was formed in January 1999 we had the mandate of re-dividing this social landscape of this country and also to secure a national social gain which will provide, for the rationalisation of the existing social and welfare services. I want to underline this, Sir.

12:55 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

The primary focus will be to work first of all for: (1) Strong families - and the Honourable Member for St. John should smile at this - and communities;

The eradication of poverty;

The provision of an effective safety net for the most vulnerable in the society;

Reform of the social sector to meet the challenges of the new millennium; and

The creation of a caring society for all - which the Honourable Member for Christ Church West enunciated in his presentation in this Honourable Chamber this morning.

Sir, in a broad sense, the Ministry encompasses the function of:

The provision of assistance to vulnerable groups such as the poor, children, the disabled and the elderly;

Facilitation and encouragement of a wider range of gender issues - I will speak to that later too, Sir;

The development of policies for persons with disabilities;

The provision of referral services for the physically challenged - and I will also speak more in depth about that as we get into that.

The promotion of foster care for the elderly and those living under assistance arrangement; and

Urban development - not the Urban Development Commission (UDC).

Sir, the mission of the Ministry of Social Transformation is also informed by the world summit for social development which was held in Copenhagen in 1995 and the directional plan of action for the eradication of poverty which was held in Trinidad and Tobago in 1996. These two accords formulated a backdrop for the start of a process of creating and building mechanisms to address issues of poverty and social building.

Sir, the global conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, properly referred to as SIDS in observing the vulnerability of the region, identified slow economic growth as placing a serious and increasing pressure on the capacity of the countries to provide basic services for their people and placing a high burden on women particularly those women who are heads of households. This vulnerability is further encapsulated in their reliance on export driven cash crops, a tourism sector that is controlled in part by international economic circumstances and trade and commercial agreements which can have a dramatic impact on their economies and their exposure - certainly as we in the Caribbean would experience - to natural disasters.

Compared to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) - I want to note this and these are crucial points because the truth must be told - Barbados has performed well in the area of social development. Recent levels of poverty are much lower than in neighbouring islands. Social programmes have been put in place to alleviate the degree of poverty in Barbados. This point was mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West. At the same time you will recognise that the Ministry of Social Transformation has been established to oversee or to supervise this process.

Sir, in addition, the Government of Barbados in its 1996-2000 plan proposed the establishment of safety nets among which are the intensifications - when we look at education to our school feeding programme, adult literacy and partnership with the private sector - of upgrading educational, recreational and community oriented facilities. Later, Sir, I would also speak about an agreement that we are currently finalising between ourselves and the non-governmental organisation (NGO's) fraternity in Barbados.

Sir, overall, Barbados enjoys a fairly stable social and economic environment.

I do not want to stay in this Honourable Chamber and feel that every thing is all right. I remember last year in this same debate, the Honourable Member for St. George South made mentioned of the fact of how could we be comfortable in heaven and next door to us tolerate a hell.

Sir, there still remains pockets of poverty which needs to be critically addressed. In addition, problems of human resource development need to be addressed in order for the country to be competitive in the international environment. Our social transformation process embodies a multi-faceted approach that hinges on the provision of a clear mix of activities that are fully cognisant of the role of social capital in the creation of prosperity and national development.

Therefore, building on the concept of social capital and on the free minds that societies are built from other social groups rather than individuals, the ministry will focus on the building of strong community organisation and also to set mechanisms for achieving a higher level of positive change.

I want to set that as the foundation because after today nobody in this country is to say that the Ministry of Social Transformation does not have a broad-based policy or macro policy. I will deal with programmes and so on later.

Sir, I hope that I am not sounding too much like a politician. I hope that you will tell me that I sound more like a technocrat and like a person who is trying to push a vision for us.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I would like to tell you that you have got two minutes.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, with the promise that I will have many more minutes later.

Asides

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, in that two minutes I just want to say that we will establish a technical committee on social development. As I have already alluded, this has already been in train with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Sir, we will appoint a panel to review legislation and to make recommendations on appropriate legislative framework and the facilitation of institutional arrangement to appoint trade unions, churches, communities and non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and the

private sector to assist with the provision of social services.

Sir, let me say this. I want to commend all the churches in Barbados, all of those umbrella non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Barbados, CBOs and individuals who people might not have realised have given of their time and effort to the Ministry of Social Transformation. In my view, Barbadians are more aware of the social dimension and want to make a contribution to the social landscape of Barbados.

Sir, despite all the criticism against the churches in this country, I want to say that the churches and in particular the Barbados Association of Non-governmental Organisations (BANGO), have come out and are working with the Ministry. Sir, if you really examine the social landscape of this country, you cannot detract from the work that the churches are contributing to Barbados.

1:05 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

I am not talking sectorial or religious now, Sir. I am talking about the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church, even the Rastafarians, if you consider them to be a religion. They are coming into the Ministry and they are lending their ideas.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member, please wind up.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, I will wind up this way. It is important that the public of this country make a connection between the Departments of the Ministry of Social Transformation and the actual Ministry of Social Transformation. I am going to list those departments for the public's information.

The most important thing, Sir, is that the work in the Ministry of Social Transformation requires a special type of person, not just a person who goes through the Civil Service at the normal process, but a special type of person is required in the Ministry of Social Transformation if we are to further get our mandate pushed faster, if not, Sir, you will find that you will be down with the bureaucracy of persons who believe that they have a right to sit in their offices of the Ministry of Social Transformation and prohibit things from happening rather than to make them happen.

I am saying, Sir, that the time has come when we have to screen those persons who want to work in the Ministry of Social Transformation because it is my view, the most prerequisite for working in a Ministry like this is that of caring, sharing, and understanding the needs of the poor and marginalised in Barbados. You could have a person qualified a million times, if he does not care about the interest of poor people then, therefore, he will not fit the profile of the Ministry.

Sir, just allow me to list those departments to make the connection between the departments and the Ministry of Social Transformation.

The National Assistance Board;

The Community Development Division;

The Welfare Department;

I hate that word “welfare.” We will get to that later, Sir.

The Urban Development Commission;

The Child Care Board;

The National Disability Unit;

The Poverty Alleviation Bureau; and

The Bureau of Women’s Affairs.

Sir, although I came in late down in the order, Sir, I am hoping that my score will be about 25 and I am hoping to reach 100 before this debate is over. I am very serious, Sir, about the profiling of the Ministry of Social Transformation.

Sir, I will sit down now, according to John Stewart Mills, but the time will come later in this debate when I shall stand up again. I want to thank you, Sir.

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress and asked for leave to sit again and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting be now suspended until 245 p.m. today, Sir. We are having a quick meeting of Cabinet at 200 o’clock to finish some work left over from yesterday.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

I beg to second that.

The question that the sitting be suspended until 2:45 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.

1:15 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken the House was in Committee of Supply. To that, it now reverts.

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and Mr. D.A. CARTER resumed the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Resumed)

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

This Committee is now in session.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, I want to start on this Head and it is rather interesting that the Government of the day, after hearing a wonderful speech from the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, started these Estimates with the Head called Ministry of Social Transformation. Even though I was referred to as a buffoon by the indentured servant of the private sector I would not allow that to sidetrack me because the issue of social transformation must be the highlight of this Parliament. People who do not understand the feelings of the poor in this country cannot come at the last hour of their political life to educate people who have spent their whole 42 years or more than that looking after the interest of the

poor. We cannot accept people who have decided to represent the interest of the five per cent in this country to come to this Parliament and masquerade as if they are the new found saviours and fighting on behalf of the masses.

One would have expected, Sir, after hearing such a wonderful speech that when the vendors were downstairs looking for consolation and looking for comfort that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West would have done the same thing that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas did, that he would have gone out there and represented the interest of the vendors, but he was nowhere to be found to find social transformation for the vendors and to make sure that at the end of the day those poor people were able to get something to take home for their families.

Your conviction must be there and it cannot only be based on a cheap political speech but must be grounded in your soul and you must know exactly what you are talking of. You must not only talk it, but you must be prepared to practise it, and that is why I say that it was rather interesting that social transformation happens to be the first head that we have to deal with in this Parliament.

I would expect the Honourable Member for Christ Church West to deal with the issues and tell us about his enlightened policy for the interest of the poor people in this country and how a Ministry like this if it was in place since 1976 when the Honourable Member were the Attorney General in this country what social transformation would have taken place in this country.

I want people to understand that social transformation started before two years ago. It started when Errol Barrow told Sir James Tudor that he had to implement free secondary education. When he asked him how he was going to do it, he told him implement it or I will fire you. That was social transformation. Mr. Errol Walton Barrow even went further. He employed thousands of people at something called Parks and Beaches to make sure, instead of their waiting on the State for handouts, that that department was able to deliver jobs and the MTW agencies were opened up to employ people to empower people. He did not only educate them but he made sure that free secondary education had a basis to it where people were employed so that they could get money to help buy school books and to send their children to school.

The Democratic Labour Party is well grounded in social transformation. I do not expect any gump or any indentured servant for the private sector who refers to me as a buffoon to come in here and tell me anything about poor people. I am grounded in "poorness" and I am not ashamed of my poverty. Anybody who feels that they can lecture to me on poverty, I say to them that they should be ashamed of themselves because most of those people who are in here now masquerading when the Barbados Workers' Union wanted them to represent their interest they said to the Barbados Workers' Union we cannot represent your interest, we have to represent the interest of the five per cent down town. So the buffoon will speak on social transformation.

I am saying that any future Democratic Labour Party within the next five or four years will have to come with a new policy of social transformation again because it is clear to me that we have moved to a state where we feel that handouts and welfarism is the nature of development in this country.

I am going to make a bold statement in this Parliament today. Any country that calls itself a progressive country and votes so much money in giving people handouts is a country doomed and it

cannot prosper for the simple reason that the strength of Barbados happens to be its people. When the majority of its people have to depend on handouts and financial grants it does not speak well for the economy of Barbados because it means that you are developing a “too few” and expecting the masses to depend on handouts. I do not blame the Minister for that policy, for the simple reason that his heart is in the right place. We must look at this at a higher level and it must be a Government policy, it must be a Cabinet policy to recognise that when the economy is growing instead of giving people \$500 it might be better to offer those people some type of work. What we are developing in this country is a mentality not to work. It is a serious issue.

I would like to see in this country where the National Insurance Department instead of paying people to stay home on unemployment, they develop a policy where a grant can be given. You have two choices, you can get the grant and go back to work or if you do not want to work you stay. I believe in the initial stages that a lump sum of money should be put there for every unemployed person when they are fired or dismissed from a job to give them an option. There are too many people in this country who have taken unemployment benefits when they could easily get a grant and go back and be productive in this country. We are encouraging too many people not to work in this country. We are developing the wrong mentality and I think it is really regrettable when one looks and sees the type of people who have to rely on handouts, people like everybody here in this Parliament. It is regrettable that a Parliament that looks like us will say that we have a right to put handouts for people. What the people want must be work and the right to work and we should not go down for lunch here and see vendors out there who cannot get the right to get a key to go and work for a living, people who want to work.

The same way that people could meet to discuss things like the abattoir, the right of the vendors must also take priority in this Parliament. If we are talking about social transformation the social transformation in this country must be seen when we move from the welfare state to putting everybody back to work. This is a serious matter.

If everybody comes along and gets the attitude that you do not have to produce to get something it is a mentality that can only destroy this country. I hope those who have the right and the power to do something about this are listening and are prepared to do something about it. As I said in this Parliament, there are many people in this country who are prepared to see this player mentality flourish in this country because they want to see Barbadians in the minority in this country.

We, as parliamentarians, cannot feel happy to see this type of policy flourishing in Barbados. We should be ashamed of ourselves to tell people that we are prepared to hand out to our brothers and sisters like how the slave masters handed out food to us. This is exactly where we are in this country. It cannot be a good picture when we look down the road and recognise that people believe that handing food in bags to people is the type of policy that we want for our brothers and sisters. The question to this Parliament is, who are we to decide this of our own? Are we the new slave masters, the 28 of us who have decided upon ourselves that we have a right to treat our brothers and sisters now like how the slave masters treated our fore parents? No. This cannot happen in this Parliament. We need to put a stop to it.

If you tell me that this happens to be an ad hoc programme and that it will not continue for too long I might be prepared to support it, but I cannot support a programme that is founded and grounded on the policy that if you keep the poor people poor they will always come to you begging and that is one way of keeping them. Poor people in this country cannot be seen like this. They must be seen as assets to the

country capable of producing.

In order for Barbados to be a productive country every single soul must get on board and produce. I support any policy that tells me that there is an avenue for people to gravitate to where they can be proud to be productive souls in this country.

Instead of that, what we are hearing is that we are prepared to get Urban Development Commission to give \$5 000 to this young person or that young person to go to Courts and buy a fridge and all of that foolishness. I know they might not know that this is what is happening with the money but if you do not know, you know now.

I know the Minister is not aware of this. When he knows, he will do something about it. It cannot be a Ministry where strong, able people are getting the majority of the money when the old people and the young people who should be getting the benefits of this money. Some people feel that this Ministry is for people who want \$5 000 and as soon as it is paid they run to Courts to buy a fridge, a stove and a bed, when they could be out working.

The elderly in this country have worked too hard for this country and most of them that you will see rushing to the Ministry of Social Transformation would have been people who worked in the agricultural industry in this country. I want to say something about those workers because we tend to underrate the worth of those people in this country. Those people built this country from a sugar estate now to a tourism industry, to a manufacturing industry, to an informatics industry but we never valued the labour of those people. I am saying that we are ungrateful and sometimes we need a flogging.

When the voice of the private sector gets up in here and behaves as if they have now found a new life, tell them do not touch the Honourable Member for St. Lucy for the simple reason I am not in here for fanfare. I am not newly converted. My interest has always been grounded in the interest of the poor in this country. Nobody can refer to me as a gump for the private sector. Nobody can refer to me as an indentured servant. They must refer to me as someone fighting on behalf of the masses in this country and that is why when the Minister brings anything that is of importance to social transformation in this country I will support him.

I also want to tell the Minister that I understand this is a new Ministry and you must be given some flextime and some leverage and latitude but also you have another year to look at it and formulate your plan. At the end of the five years I want you to understand that instead of paying out welfare cheques, I want to hear that this Ministry has been able to use community development to go in on the block and convert those souls there on the block, representing the interest of the “too few” downtown who are getting rich off the fellows on the block; and that those fellows on the block convert their time to help this country enter into the productive sectors that we need to have them in. They cannot continue to be servants for the “too few”, people who came in here lately and control the mass of the wealth of this country in a short space of time. They must be seen in the productive sector and not the type of productive sector that is known outside of Barbados because productivity outside of Barbados is not the same as we know productivity is in Barbados.

Those youngsters on the block must be told that what they are doing is helping to develop other people to build their economies overseas while at the same time they are destroying the economy of Barbados.

Barbados must be seen as top priority.

There are people who come into this country and feel that they must ride on the backs of Barbadians to get all the medical supplies to send back out of this country to other countries.

3:00 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000.

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

but they are people who come in this come and feel that they must ride on the backs of Barbadians to get all the medical supplies and send back out of this country to other countries, to get all the assets and the foreign exchange to send back out and we put them up on high pedestals and tell people that they are working in the interest of the poor in this country. I call on my good friend on the back bench - it was a beautiful speech this morning - to support matters like these because you have a double role in this Parliament. You do not have a single role, you have a double role in this Parliament to make sure that the fellows on the block get their fair share of the cake.

I thank you.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Chairman, I believe that in his opening presentation, since this is the first time, I think, the Minister has had a chance to actually deal with his Ministry that he basically wish to ascertain from Members of the House and perhaps the community at large in Barbados that he has the goodwill of Barbadians. I do not think that the Minister of Social Transformation should be in any doubt that he has the goodwill of persons who want to see success both for the Ministry itself, for the public workers who work in it and for the agencies which carry out the work and also for the Minister himself. Because, Sir, it would be morally wrong and economically foolish for us in this Chamber to find ourselves in a situation where we write off an entire generation of Barbadians.

Therefore, when the issue of social transformation comes to the fore what we are looking at are some of the key props and pillars on which we are going to be able to take the Barbadians society forward.

As the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said, with everybody playing some role. Because if anyone individual is lost in the process it means that the task of social transformation is not being achieved.

I do not think that in this debate or in any other debate that I have participated in, in this House, that people have ever sought to do a simple trade off between economic growth and social transformation. I know we get some knocks from the Honourable Member for St. Michael West but he has not been in here long enough - well, he used to come a lot and listen, that is true, but he cannot say, even though he is often on this subject that there is anybody who has ever trumpeted in here that you must only have economic growth. That they support a trade-off where economic growth is the principal objective of the state and social transformation plays no role. Because we believe that fairness in the society and social justice go hand in hand with enterprise. In other words, I assume what we are all trying to do is to build enterprise in Barbados with social justice and fairness. Therefore, it would have to be task of the Ministry of Social Transformation to set some goals to make Barbados a better place for Barbadians to live in in the year 2000 and in fact throughout the entire century because what we are doing now is laying the groundwork for future generations of Barbadians. That means that the Ministry of Social Transformation has to be mindful of a number of things that go beyond the performance of the National Assistance Board, the Welfare Department and all of those agencies and must see itself as establishing links across Ministries in Barbados so that there is a link between enterprise and social justice and fairness in our society. That means that the Ministry of Social Transformation has to have a vision of bringing deprived and depressed neighbourhoods in our country up to a certain standard to cut crime.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Yes, that is the task of social transformation in Barbados, to increase employment. That in a sense is also a task and to prepare people to be full participants in the society and also the improvement of health and housing. Not necessarily in the delivery of the specifics but in preparing people to take their place in the society and to benefit from healthy living and good standard of housing. It is a difficult exercise. The Minister therefore is going to have to reach his arms, not just across political boundaries because we do not see it as a partisan scenario but across Ministries within his own Government and ask for their collaboration and assistance.

In this Estimates debate I feel very strongly that our focus should be on making sure that all of our children in Barbados are given a decent life. That is vital because everyday in this country we can see examples. Even today the newspapers are flooded with examples of people gripping and complaining about children and the conditions in which they are raised and so on. Very often their views are valid and we have to focus our social transformation policies on our children. We also have to make sure that in the social security and the employment system, this is where the clarion call has to come from the Ministry of Social Transformation to play a very active role in helping people who can work to do so. Also, in assisting those who cannot work so that they do not fall out of the system.

The point is that in Barbados in recent times we have discovered that there are also a large number of Barbadians who even though they are working are part of the working poor. That is not just a phenomenon in Barbados. Nobody in this side has ever argued it. In fact one of the impacts of trade liberalisation and globalisation or rather let me be generic - the trends that the world is taking - I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central waxing very eloquently about that is the

difference between the haves and the have-nots and the fact that it is widening. What we consider to be the have-nots is not just the unemployed and pensioners and children growing up in difficult circumstances but very often working people and people in the middle class.

There was an attack on the middle classes in Barbados. No politician in this country has ever had the courage to give the middle class a world vision. All of a sudden in the year 2000 everybody is attacking the middle class but nobody has ever stood up and said what the responsibilities of the emerging middle class in Barbados should have been. The Democratic Labour Party trumpeted that it created the middle class. The Barbados Labour Party trumpeted that it consolidated on the gains of that middle class by giving them a lot of the material and other benefits which they now enjoy but nobody ever articulated a world vision for the middle class in Barbados.

The middle class is the largest sector in the middle, the sector to whom the policies of social transformation should also be appealing. Your task is not just for those at the very bottom because the ones at the very bottom have a direct link and inter-relationship to those in the middle. Lawyers will not be prosperous if their clients themselves do not have resources. They do not live on legal aid in Barbados. Doctors in this country will not do well unless those at the bottom have resources. The building contractors and all of the other professionals in this country who benefit significantly from the resources of those at the bottom will not survive unless we have a society that is fair and promotes social justice and also ensure that benefits spread throughout the society.

The majority of us in here come from being service providers of one sort or another including religious services because they are now going to classify that under the UN classification as a form of business.

3:10 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I do not know if the Honourable Member for Christ Church East can check that. They have television programmes. It is in a sense being classified in that way. I think they are calling it as life something services, which they are now trying to classify.

We all come from that background and therefore need to understand the linkage between the success of our families and our own attempts to be involved in enterprise and the successes of those at the bottom.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think it is vital that the Ministry of Social Transformation, in this particular debate through the Minister, sets up for this House, the basic standards and bench marks that he wishes to achieve over the next four to five years. Because many of us have had the opportunity to hold the portfolios of community development and so on and so forth. All of us have read all of the reports about decentralisation about amalgamation, about the establishing of cross Ministry Linkages and none of it has been implemented with any effectiveness in Barbados. Therefore resources are being targeted in some cases at exactly the same people so you may have a situation in Barbados where a child who is facing psychological difficulties in the education system is seeing about five different psychologists from five different areas of Government. Nonsense. There must be some way that you can seek to integrate the social services across the section.

I remember in my time, there was one child who was seeing the psychologist at the Ministry of Education. He was seeing a psychologist at the Child Care Board. He was seeing a psychologist provided by the Kiwanis or Lions Club or one of those agencies. And then, it was being recommended that he sees some kind of specialist psychologist for the peculiar problems that he was facing.

I believe that this can be an extremely important debate and we look forward very much in the Democratic Labour Party for the Minister to tell us how he is going to deal with the issues of poverty and social exclusion which are complex and multidimensional problems. I am going to ask him to focus today on what he considers to be the role of the family. He got interrupted in that process and I think that that is very important because the evidence shows that children both in families that are functioning below the poverty line in Barbados as well as in many cases, families where a single mother is struggling, can also be itself a disadvantage.

I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael East was yesterday prone to criticise those who promote the nuclear family. We do not have nuclear families in Barbados. My grandmother raised many children who were not her own. I am raising a child who is not mine and they are many other people in this House who have done it. The nuclear family is a mother and father with essentially two children, but we have different ways of describing families. I was a family with a single mother, but the Honourable Member, when we went up to Government House for the swearing in, was very proud to introduce me to his father who happened to know my father from St. Giles Boys' School. Why then would he want to deny every other young man in this country and every other young woman, the opportunity of having an active father in a household, making an active contribution to the development and sustenance of that child. Why then argue that even though we have a multi focal society and the majority of our homes are single parent homes that we have to accept that that is the reality that must

continue to persist, when we know that they are also other kinds of arrangements which include not only fathers, but grandmothers, aunts, uncles, neighbours and friends who can make a very great contribution to the nurturing and development of our children and the strengthening of families in this country.

It does not take one idea to succeed. I have never argued that mine was the best. I have never argued that any on this side was the best because every individual may require different kinds of input to develop his personality to the fullest. Not only from the point of view of the family but educational inputs at every stage along the way of his life. It is those kinds of things that I hope, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, whom I know is extremely capable of articulating these views should come to the table with, in the course of this debate today.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

Mr. Chairman, I rise to make a small contribution to this debate. First of all to congratulate the Minister of Social Transformation for the way that he has approached the task of setting up and bringing into full function this most important Ministry.

The role which is required which he requires to play is really cast in the context of a very large task and large responsibility, as established in the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party. Under the heading of social transformation, we captured the concept in a single sentence. "Every Barbadian has the right to a decent standard of living."

Then, the Manifesto went on to state in a little more detail, I quote:

"The Barbados Labour Party will continue to work for strong families and communities, the eradication of poverty, the provision of a protective safety net for the most vulnerable in our society, the reform of the social sector to meet the challenges of the new millennium and the creation of a caring society for all."

And that is the context within which the Minister has successfully embarked on his task, and it is also important especially in the context of the relevant fix between the economic and social aspects of life. In fact as we perceive to build this new mixed economy, we see this drive towards having a successful dynamic economy which draws on the synergistic relationship between private and public sectors and in the middle of the markets really, as just providing the fuel towards the social advancement of all of our people. It is really building on the fruits of prosperity that we hope to also transform this society and to ensure that as we advance in an economic sense that we take with us all that is good in terms of the culture and values of the Barbadian society. In short that we do not lose the Barbadian way and where in some instances you might have temporarily lost sight of it that we are able to take the opportunity to regain it.

Sir, I see the role of the Minister and his Ministry of Social Transformation as being that of a catalyst. There is not an expectation on our part, and certainly not on any of the Honourable Members here, and certainly I hope not of the public that by virtue of having a Ministry of Social Transformation, by virtue of having a visionary an energetic Minister that this Ministry can and will do all that is needed to be done to take the society forward. As I said that is not the will of many of the Honourable Members in this Chamber, but I sense that this Ministry could easily fall victim to a view point which is creeping into Barbadian society where many Barbadians are abandoning their individual responsibilities to

themselves to their immediate families, to their communities and to their nation and leaving it all to the Government, whatever that attraction happens to be.

So that whether it be in the unfortunate instance of people taking their elderly and abandoning them at the Casualty of the QEH, whether it be in the case of parents putting their children out on the street and abandoning them to the state or to the elements, whether it be to whatever form of responsibility you may find, be it in the form of people throwing garbage through their car windows and leaving it for the Government to clean up, whatever form of irresponsibility you could think of, people are leaving it to the Government.

So that in this drive for the creation of a caring society for all, it is not the executive's responsibility or the Ministry of Social Transformation is not the sole executing agency, I see it performing a catalytic role. In the performance of that catalytic role, therefore, the Ministry has quite rightly started with great enthusiasm and energy in not only running its programme, but it engaged in a dialogue in the private sector of Barbados with the NGOs and community-based organisations generally.

3:20 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

I want in the first intervention in this debate the role which community organisations can and should and should play in this work of social transformation. I would first want to underscore the importance communities. Communities are more than mere aggregation of individual houses in an area. It is the old adage that the whole is worth more than the sum of the parts. Unfortunately in Barbados, we have spent the last three decades or so building new developments, new housing locations, where we put in roads, put in electricity, put in gas, put in all the services, and we build better houses than any of our ancestor would have ever dreamed that they or their family would have lived in.

Unfortunately, after thirty years of existence of some of those districts, there is still not a sense of community. There is no sense of community in some of these newer districts, no sense of community that compares with the sense of community that you would have had in St. Patricks, for example, or in Zion Hill, or in Avis Town, St. Lucy, or in Scarborough where people would have lived there for years. The daughter would have built a house next to the mother, the mother raised her children and the children of the lady up the street, and there there are very strong ties.

It was interesting to note that week before last, at the service which was held in memory of the life of the mother of one of our Honourable Members that the person presenting the eulogy was able to list the families which are the typical household names within the community of St. Lawrence. One can be certain that the community of St. Lawrence would be able to produce a higher proportion of well-adjusted citizens, would be able to have safety mechanisms, have their own social safety net in a way that some of these new communities would not.

The role of the Community development Division, for example, within the Ministry of Social Transformation has to be revitalised . I remember the glory days of the Community Development Division. Certainly, my own experience in 1970s and 1980s and their involvement in youth and community where there was an active presence of community development officers on the ground and they recognised the importance of assisting communities in building formal institution. In terms for example of establishing a youth group, establishing a sports group, strengthening a church or other community-based organisations, that is the kind of role that is continued today by the Community Development Division. I see this Community Development Division acting as a catalyst assisting communities to use the natural tendency of people to group, to forge communities where there are only houses right now.

For example, there are already examples of really good community-based organisations which are involved in self-help and mutual-help programmes. In my own area, the Mount Sinai Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Fair View, Christ Church, have indicated to me that the men of that church are interested, available and committed to providing the labour to repair the homes of the elderly in the Fair View, St. Patrick, Waldron, Lowthers Hill area, which is the ... are for their church, provided that they can get some assistance with the materials. That is not handouts. There are no handouts; there is no welfarism. There is nothing vulgar about that activity. These are people who, in their own community, have identified the ways in which they can help.

Masons, carpenters and artisans are willing to help and through the poverty alleviation fund. The Ministry can be supported where community groups which would have the interest but not the resources, would be able to obtain some assistance from this very focused and targeted funds to help other persons in the community. Between the Community Development Division which would help to ensure that the model of this Mount Sinai Seventh-Day Adventist Church can be replicated by way of having formal structures which will bring people together, having groups that actually work and by providing resources in support of these community programmes. In that way we can help to alleviate poverty, improve a the general conditions in communities, strengthen those communities, therefore, and create that caring society for all in a way that would not My third point of concern is people willing to bear responsibility. So here we have people willing to bear responsibility, just needing a little help; and the Ministry of social Transformation being able to join in and help in that particular endeavour.

Sir, I want as I wind down in this first to strongly support the Ministry in this endeavour to urge communities, especially the newer communities which in some cases are only at this point an aggregation of houses, to use the opportunity and the resource within the Ministry of Social Transformation to assist them in forming groups to provide opportunities for these neighbours who have been thrown together by the lottery of house purchase. You have no choice who your neighbours are but you are all in the game together. You are all in the community together and in a very caring society the Ministry of Social Transformation will help these new communities to build that spirit and

ultimately if we can have that Mount Sinai Seventh-Day Adventist's example replicated in all communities then the caring society for all, responsibility for our fellowman will not be things which are abandoned to the Government alone. Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Sir I rise in this debate to give my wholehearted support to the programme as outlined not only in the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, but indeed for the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue that have been indicated before this Honourable Chamber. May I say at the outset that the holistic approach which is being brought by the Honourable Minister is one which I would wish to applaud.

For the last few years in this Chamber I have been making the point that we have to reach a stage in this country where we are capable of rendering assistance to people who are in need not just with the focus of the particular service that they may need at the point in time but from a holistic perspective that allows them to move from a state of dependence to a state of independence and ultimately a state of interdependence which is the point at which they recognise their responsibility to give back to the society.

3:30 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

They can only do so if they are capable first of all of standing on their own two feet and providing for their families.

Therefore, when the Opposition speaks about the perpetuation of handouts in a welfare state, it is to suggest that the Opposition has not yet understood the nature and extent to which the State has had to change in the new Barbados in order to recognise that it is only through the maximisation of the potential of the population that we would be able to build a sustainable living for all in this country.

I, therefore, feel very strongly that the approach which is now being evident by this Government through the establishment of the social policy committee of Cabinet which is an inter-ministerial committee, as outlined by the Minister of Social Transformation, chaired by the Prime Minister and comprises the Ministry of Social Transformation, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Rural Affairs - I am not too sure if the Ministry of Sports is also on it - and with the supporting public officers allowing for collaboration of effort between the distinct social services in this country so that when we come to deal with the population who most need the services, that we take an approach that meets their overall needs to move them from that state of dependence to the state of independence.

Let me give you an example of this, Mr. Chairman. We have a situation where for example someone

may go to welfare for a welfare cheque because they have two or three children who are not being supported by their father. By the same token, in that household, there may be other problems which require one to engage the attention of other Government social services. When the Welfare Department traditionally looked at this person, they would have looked at this person very much in isolation from the other services that were being accessed by the same individual or other members of that family.

I believe that this inter-ministerial social policy committee combined with the establishment of the new family affair unit will allow for us to treat to the problems of a family in total and to be able to determine how can we move this family - not the child who wants a textbook waiver or a petty fee waiver - from a point of dependence to a point where they can provide for themselves and where they are capable of not being made to feel as though they are in exile in their own community simply because they cannot provide for themselves.

Now, this requires a marriage of the services delivered by the Ministry of Social Transformation, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, in some instances from the Ministry of Home Affairs and in some instances the Ministry of Community Development, Labour and Sports. What happens is that the officers who are all field officers instead of, therefore, being preoccupied with the delivery of the particular service that is within their department, will meet with the other field officers for that district from the other agencies and develop a programme in consultation with the family that bears some reality to what is achievable.

In other words, if for example, the person has no training in any form of activity at all and has no job, how do we find a training programme that is adequate to be able to move a person who is 28 or 32 years old - because a person who is 32 or even 40 years old is still young because they still have another 25 years of working life - and train this person for six months, a year or eighteen months and be able to move them from the state of unemployment to employment.

If at the same time, they may be other problems attending to the household like some form of physical abuse or substance abuse then we are capable also of dealing with that. Very often, the stress of unemployment and the stress of not being able to provide for your family will sometimes lead to forms of abuse whether there be physical, mental or substance abuse and we need therefore to be able to integrate that.

If for example, there is a child who has been wayward and who has had to attend the out of school suspension centre, how do we provide the counselling that can help that child also to recognise his or her responsibilities to himself and to the family at the same time that you are providing the training for the bread winner of the family to be able to provide for them.

There are a whole host of issues that will vary from family to family or from individual to individual. I therefore, believe that the holistic approach which we would bring will help us to achieve this goal of moving these persons from dependence to independence and then to interdependence.

I want also to address this point and I intend to come back in this debate on a number of occasions because I think that a lot of what we are doing is so relevant to Barbados, and in particular the urban population of Barbados, which I want to address today.

I want to address the question of young people who are at risk. For the last few years, the Ministry of Youth Affairs has been conducting surveys of different types. There is a massive youth census and survey which seek to interview every young person between the ages of 15 and 30 and that is done every three years. Indeed, we are now in the middle of one which is being conducted which will be the second one to have ever been conducted. Preliminary results have been shared with the Press after the first 5000 or 6000 of the 80 000 persons were interviewed by the Director of Youth Affairs, Mr. Carter. The first of those surveys were conducted back in 1995 to 1996.

We also do however, something which will allow us to be able to have the strategic focus that we want. Every year, we take the school leaving population and on or about this time, forms are sent out to every school to have the young children who are leaving school to identify what they intentions are in respect to their plans once they leave schools, whether they plan to go into some form of training or educational institution like the Barbados Community College (BCC), the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP) or the Barbados Vocational Training Board, whether they plan to go overseas, whether they plan to go to work or whether they have no plans at all. That information is then taken and it is processed.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs through the youth commissioners and the youth development programme immediately then target all of those young people who indicated that they had no plans or did not know what they should do when leaving school. This allows us to have a strategic focus using the 32 youth commissioners to be able to go to these young people in their communities, identify what their interest may be and see whether we cannot match them with some activity in training or employment that will allow them not to simply be on the streets.

We recognise, however, that they are those who will inevitably still for some deviant reason end up outside of the formal system of work and training after they leave school.

3:40 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

We have written, through the Director of Youth Affairs to the Probation Department as well as the Registrar of the Supreme Court for us to be notified of all the young people who are put on probation or who are fined, once they are convicted, reprimanded or discharged, once they appear in the criminal court, so as to allow the Division of Youth Affairs through the youth commissioners and Barbados

Youth Service to work on a one to one basis with these young people.

The Attorney General is correct when he says sotto voce that we are pursuing a policy of early intervention. Even though they have been before the law courts on one occasion we can seek to stop them ever having to go back before the court and to reduce the rate of recidivism in respect of those young people.

There is another category, those who may be deviant, or those who may be at risk but who have not yet faced the law courts or faced the police and we believe we have a responsibility to try and get engaged in some form of training and economic activity.

It is for this reason, Mr. Chairman, that the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the National Cultural Foundation and the Ministry of Community Development have got together and developed a number of programmes for young people at risk, in traditional forms of training. They can go to the Training Board and do carpentry or tiling or plumbing, but there are people who may not have any interest in the construction trade or who may not have any interest in the upholstery trade but who have a strong artistic bent and who, with the correct training and opportunity, may well find themselves being some of this country's best creators rather than being on the block liming and feeling marginalised in this society.

To this intent, Mr. Chairman, we have developed four training programmes which we hope to start early in the next financial year and by that I mean from May onwards. One is dance and movement and this is particularly for young men at risk, not young women, where we take a number of young men and we train them in movement. We have persons both locally through Pinelands and other dance troupes as well as two people including one of Barbados' foremost dancer, Richild Springer, with a chap from Guadeloupe who is trained in street dance and jazz dance as well as taking persons who are trained in acrobatics, because young men tend to prefer the more acrobatic type of movement than the graceful type that is otherwise associated with modern dance.

We trained another set of young people in drumming, in beating old iron, in beating triangles, in all forms of percussion instruments. Not only do we train them in these activities but we recognise that simply to give them the proficiency in the arts without carrying them to the point of economic activity may be worse than never to have trained them at all.

What I mean by that is that when you are finished training them, you have to show them how to make money from it. You have to call the hotels and band them together in troupes that you can have some stilt walkers and some percussion people and four or six dancers, so that they can get a piece of work in the hotels or at a cocktail party or to open a festival.

We would then ensure that the National Cultural Foundation, through its business development department, can work with these youngsters to put them in connection with areas of economic activity. In addition to the training in dance and movement, every young person who goes through that programme as well as the other three that I will identify for you, must be trained in life skills and entrepreneurship, because, once again, we recognise that people must know how to handle their feelings, people must know how to save, how to treat other people and how to walk in and present themselves. All of these are things that impact on the capacity to get work and maintain the work.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member has three minutes.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

I am trying to identify the other three.

The second one is in music where we are taking 30 youngsters and training them for an eighteen month period in different instruments and rhythm sections as well as those who can sing, with an opportunity to create six bands at the end of it. So we are not only serving the needs of the at-risk young people but we are serving the needs of the cultural industry for us to have a sustainable flow of good musicians.

The third one is in fabric design and the making of ties and shirts. Many of us see Nelson Mandela in these pretty fabric shirts and wonder how he is always wearing them. I am sure that many of the men in this country would be proud to wear shirts that are locally designed and made in silk, cotton and linen, if given the opportunity to do so. So we will train a batch in fabric printing and design and we will train a batch in the actual making of the shirts and ties.

There is a Barbadian woman by the name of Grace Edghill who lives in North America and who does training in correctional institutions throughout North America, training young people to do the very same things, and she is willing to come back here to do it for us with these young people.

The fourth area is in the area of sculpture, craft and unusual painting. We brought a chap from South Africa here late last year who we are bringing back. He paints using recycled plastics. Part of the problem in giving young people an opportunity to paint is the cost of the material that they must find to be able to paint. What he does is to take the plastic off of a pep bottle, diapers, anything. He has a heating gun and the paintings that he would design and make for you just using plastic, you would swear that it was an oil painting.

We would use him as well as other notable Barbadian sculptors. There are a number of them here whom we will use to train young people to do some sculpting in wood because we are too weak in our sculpting at the moment and in other crafts. Recognising that, the National Cultural Foundation will do the market research in those areas to find out the kinds of things that people will buy for their houses, whether ornamental or functional, so that they are not making them in a vacuum. There must be a relationship between what they make and what the market wants.

Mr. Chairman, I want to come back because I am not finished outlining this programme. We have a number of programmes which need to engage the attention of young people in this country but it comes not from a single application of one Ministry, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, or of one statutory organisation, the National Cultural Foundation, but collaboration with the Ministry of Social Transformation, Community Development, the National Cultural Foundation, the Attorney General's Chambers with the National Council on Substance Abuse, all of us, coming together and working together, because at the end of the day, Barbados is too small and we can identify all the people who are giving trouble, one by one and put programmes for each one.

It is about building trust. Unless you can build trust with those young people you cannot bring them back into mainstream society and keep them out of the hands of criminal activity. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Chairman, I thought for once that I was transparent because you did not recognise my presence.

Sir, there is a misconception that the Ministry of Social Transformation is just a collective body of various departments coming together and doing the old thing that used to occur under the Welfare Department and the old time traditional welfare policy. Many people have stigmatised welfarism and, as a consequence, with all the stigmatization of welfarism you find it difficult to use a word which initially was not stigmatised.

Over the years, because of the pragmatic approach to the distribution of services to the pauperised and the marginalised in the society, the crude way of doing things was classified as welfarism. This style emerged out of a long history that goes right back to the period of not only colonial times but to the period of slavery. The dependency became even more severe at the stage of the abolition of slavery itself. While there was slavery there was full employment. That is the irony of it. When there was slavery there was full employment but there was no pay. When there was abolition of slavery and the slaves were put on their own as a consequence not only of the struggle of the revolution that preceded the abolition like the Haitian Revolution of 1791 or the other revolution that preceded that but as a consequence of the economic conditions of the day that made it favourable for the plantation owners, those animalistic characters, to abandon the masses of people without a cent while they were compensated for the loss of property.

Therefore, they were living on the plantations controlled by the Masters and Servants Act. Their names were put in a red book and tarnished when they revolted against the system and life became extremely hard for them. That is why I classified it as the pauperisation of the working class black man, the man of African heritage.

3:50 p.m.

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Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

You must understand that type of philosophy in order to understand where we are as a consequence of moving through the evolutionary process over the last few years. The poor law came into the existence and a few white men top heavy with wealth, gave out handouts and were honoured with names of philanthropist and humanitarian, all type of creditable terms were given to these people for the work which they had done. I am going to premise my discussion in the efforts made by the black man in order to help himself. The true philanthropist of the day is the black man who attempted to help himself at the first quarter of the 20th century. When black men came here from hard work in the Panama Canal and formed the friendly societies and pool resources in order to purchase land and were restricted by the same class who they struggled against to be free from purchasing land as a consequence of putting legislation in place and restricting the friendly societies to one acre of land so that black people would not have a stake in the economy in terms of purchasing land. The evolutionary process itself emerges as a consequence of that type of history.

Those of us who subscribe to the struggle of the revolution and give credit to the black man of Haiti, the first black state that set itself free as a consequence of struggle and not honoured and given freedom by any colonial master, they had a motto, a special motto which guided the revolution. That was: liberty, not vested to anyone, fought for; equality and fraternity.

The philosophy of the Ministry of Social Transformation holds very strong and firm to those three tenets, they underpin the philosophy of the Ministry of Social Transformation. After the abolition our next task is to fight for equality. The state had to play a meaningful role in bringing about that equality.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Well the church must be given some credit but the state entered into the struggle because the colonial masters never believed that the state should play a role on the behalf of the children of the barefoot slaves or their offsprings. The colonial masters looked after themselves. They were the legislators, the executives, the judicial, everything. They controlled all three forms the separation of power. But we came in and we recognised that in addition to the philosophy of the Haitian revolution which came out the French revolution itself it was necessary to fuse that philosophy with the philosophy of utilitarian who had an ideology that stated “the greatest good for the greatest number”. In addition to that, as we move into 1951 the good old tenets that came out of the Eurocentric philosophy position of Jean Jacques Rousseau of the general will of the people as a consequence of the struggle to gain the adult franchise which came into being in Barbados through the Barbados Labour Party, the black self Government was established and therefore we settled on our programme. The kind of data that the United Nations bodies, the Inter-American Development Bank, the documents that came from the World Summit, most of that information, although the statistics might change, most of that information was with us prior to even the Moyne’s Commission that came in 1938 because the Moyne’s Commission got the information from the people themselves of the hardships that they were experiencing and it was from there that you saw the escalation of the social policies in the body politics of Barbados. It is against that background that the Minister, all the agencies and departments that falls under the Ministry, must work together in order to develop a programme out of the policy in order to cater to the needs of the people of Barbados.

The Ministry has put in place a number of Committees in order to execute that policy. Those

Committees that will work along with the various departments stem as a consequence of not only the programmes that exist before the Ministry came together but as a consequences of the experiences in the early stages of the formation of the Ministry. The Minister decided that he would have to have an inter-departmental Committee and what he did was brought the head of the various departments together on a monthly basis to sit down and talk about the way in which the programme is to be executed in the individual departments. Every month, once a month, apart from the individual communication between the Minister and his staff, because of the freedom, the flexibility and understanding that we need to know what is going on and the information is passed on how the programme is doing. He always trying to guide it in a humanistic way so that the services can be given to people with a sense of dignity.

That is why you heard of the proposal of the abandonment of the department called the Welfare Department and the stigma that it attached to itself.

4:00 p.m.

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Continuation of Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

The stigma that is attached to the department itself is responsible for the thinking of the Minister in wiping that stigma away. Just like when we had people in Barbados called gardeners, it is stigmatised today as horticulturist.

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

They had watchmen and we have security guards. Social progress or economic progress, if you do not understand that there are other factors of man's life beyond the things that are tangible, there is something called a distinction between a man who is an empiricist and a man who is not. A man who believes that he must see and touch everything that has value to him, but that is why they have psychologists and socialists because there are other aspects of life that are meaningful too.

If there is a psychological incumbrance on an individual, then he would not be productive. If a man believes that he is interiorised as a consequence of his classification, then that man will not be productive. If you want optimum productivity, then the man must conduct his production in a fine spirit

with those freedoms and that is why we have to remove the stigmas. That is why you do not refer to people in a negative way because it affects their relationships with other people.

Aside.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Chairman, against that background, the Ministry has decided that we will put...

Asides.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

No. No. No. I am prepared to explain anything that I say and be challenged on anything that I say. So abandonment of this whole piece meal handout approach as most people rejected the services over the years, we have decided that a more dignified and holistic approach must be used. Not that people must in perpetuity continue to look for what they call handouts from the Government of Barbados, what we want to do is to make sure we transform the life of the individual who is experiencing great economic hardship and as a consequence social isolation and in a capitalist environment where the society is so stratified, there is a severe struggle for an ordinary man at the bottom. He has to fight to earn his place in this society and the state has a role, especially since the core of the state was born out of the actual mandate given to him by the very masses of the people, he has a responsibility to those people. It is his duty to put programmes in place in order to bring those people from the state to which they live, into a sense of equality and that is why I say the principle of liberty gain in emancipation and principles of equality guide this Ministry.

The commitment of the tenant of that struggle is one of demonstrating brotherhood to people. You are not giving anybody anything. You came here in the same ship from the same place to perform the same duty. These are brothers and sisters fighting together to achieve what is their God given right. The right to be a free man and the right to work and the right to work in an environment with dignity. The right to be able to live in a society and eat and drink the best just like anybody else, not to just get sheltered but to have a real house.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I would ask the Honourable Member to wind up now. You can come again, of course.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Okay. I will talk about the programmes at a later date. That is why in the Ministry we have departments like the Urban Development Commission to deal with the problem of housing. We have the National Assistance Board, we have the Welfare Department, we have to look at child care, we have the Senior Citizens and we have the disabled.

Mr. Chairman, I am extremely grateful for your patients and hope I will be able to say a few more words on this.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to follow up on a few points made by the Minister of Education. First, Sir, that the Government recognises that there is a need for a holistic and coherent approach to the social

problems of Barbados and that is why we have set up the Cabinet Subcommittee on social policy.

Just to indicate, Sir, that one of the key working documents for the Ministry of Social Transformation as it is for the Office of the Attorney General and I hope that the Ministry of Education, is this report on criminal risk factors which were laid in here in June 1997. And an analysis of this report would show in the Recommendations that there can be no one single monolithic approach to the crime problem.

Every time I have spoken, Sir, I have made it clear that the Government has an integrated approach to crime solution. It takes time for the results to be seen because we are dealing with human conduct which is not easily capable of instant change. I do not believe anybody, since this report has been laid has examined what the Government has been doing by way of implementation from the recommendation.

I explained when we brought the legislation for the Penal System Reform Act that that was a recommendation straight out of this report. We had started the work on it before but the report itself, had urged that we establish a new penal system, focussing more on community punishments and that is going to happen, hopefully from next month, Sir. The Penal System Reform Act will be proclaimed next month. We have permission to employ five probation officers, five community service officers and, I think about nine part time attendance centre officers. All the rules for the attendance Centres have been drafted.

Sir, why I say it is important for the various Ministries to pay attention to this report is that I saw, for example, two weeks ago a statement attributed to the Department of Youth Affairs which suggested that about 40% of young people had no religious interest, the results of a preliminary survey.

Sir, we had examined that in this study of the prison population and found that, I made no comment about it when somebody called me from the Press, I said to go and read the Task Force Report. We found in 1996 and reported here in June 1997 that 90% of the inmates at Glendairy said they attended church in their childhood but the average age at which many of the inmates stopped attending church was shown in the analysis and 60% of the prison population had either never gone to church, or had stopped attending by age 16 - 60%.

So that the Ministry responsible for social transformation

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

Sixty per cent of the prison population had never gone to church or had stopped attending by age 16. A Ministry responsible for social transformation has a responsibility with the other Ministries in social policy to examine that statistic and then design strategies to deal with it. That is going to be the benefit of our joined up approach to social policy. It will be interdepartmental.

Again in the area of education, Sir, the Minister spoke of early intervention, that is a recommendation the task force. For example, that a mechanism be put in place to facilitate routine IQ testing of the early level of primary education in Barbados. That is being done, Sir.

Secondly, a school programme be designed to accommodate below average students. That is being done. These programmes will intensify and will be provided for over time as we develop the programmes and cut out some of the kinks in the programme.

In relation to drug use among prisoners the report had recommended that there be a prison-based drug rehabilitation programme. Such a programme would provide therapy for those offenders who use drugs but who must also be incarcerated because of their criminal risks. That is recommendation 7.28 of the Task Force. Check and see if we do not have the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) in the prison doing therapy and working with prisoners who have gone in there because of a drug habit. Check and see if two weeks ago we have appointed a gentleman called Mr. Burrowes with the assistance of UNDP to work in the prison specifically with drug offenders.

I am concerned just to let this Committee know, Sir, that the recommendations of the Task Force on Crime Prevention made in June 1997 which were recommendations across many areas, education and social background, religion, community organisation and involvement, drugs, unemployment - all the recommendations stretching across a wide spectrum have been noted. We have been working with the various agencies of Government where there were specific recommendations to ensure that over time the specific recommendations relating to the Statistics Department are being carried out, Sir. As I began by saying, there is a clear concerted approach to reducing offending in Barbados.

I wish finally, Sir, just to make one other comment. It is in relation to values. This is where the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of social Transformation I think have key roles. When we examine why inmates were committing crimes, 31.3 per cent of the prison population reported that they committed crimes out of a desire to get money. So there is a materialistic impulse operating among the

criminal minded; 23.4 per cent reported that they committed crimes to support a drug habit. All this talk about legalising drugs and decriminalising marijuana, decriminalise marijuana and get, more breaking and entering. There are going to 'thief' or break and enter to get in to your house. It is as simple or as crude as that. This one is a worrying statistic 14 per cent committed crimes out of anger. That is something that all of us as MPs are familiar with, that there is a level of aggression, perhaps I'd better say aggressiveness among young people and substantial elements of the youth which is conducive to criminality. They are unable to control their anger and resolve the dispute in a nonviolent way. That is something we have to work on as a Government, helping people resolve disputes and resolve conflict by means other than criminal. That is high - 14 per cent who committed crimes out of anger. We talk about bad company and strangely enough only 2.1 per cent related their commission to criminal association.

The key in these is the desire for money, supporting a drug habit, anger. Those are the three serious ones that we have to work on. I will just finish by saying this is a comprehensive document. I, for the nth time, am going to put it in the records of this House - I hear the Opposition asking and writing about the causes of crime. They do not worry too much with it in here because I would answer them, but they go out on the platform or they write it in columns. This was an analysis of the criminal population in Barbados in Glendairy prison, which analysed why they were committing crime. It is comprehensive in its findings and in its recommendations. The Government is systematically working to implement recommendations. It is foolishness to continue to say that Government has trivialised crime. This is the first Government that has made any scientific analysis and study in to crime, first ever.

Because you make sport of a man on television in the heat of an election campaign that is alleged to be trivialising crime. This Government did not trivialise crime. In the campaign the public relations people will use whatever techniques they know and can think of deal with the opponents of the Party that they are working for, but it cannot be said that this Government has trivialised crime when we have tried to understand it and I have indicated in the short time that we are taking steps, having identified what the risk factors are, we have taken steps systematically to deal with them. I believe that the pace of implementation will be stepped up now that we have the Cabinet Sub-committee on Social Policy and there are going to be greater linkages between Ministries.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member ...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Chairman, I hear you I would just like to finish by encouraging the officers in the Ministry of Social Transformation and the consultant and others to keep this as a key document and make sure that people read and understand it and implement strategies particularly aimed at the risk factors which this document has identified.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Mr. Chairman, Sir, when I first began my presentation in this Honourable Chamber, I tried to set out what is the policy of the Ministry of Social Transformation and the initiatives that will be taken under this policy. In addition to that, Sir, when I heard my friend the Representative for St. Lucy speaking, it

reminded me of a horse race. When he got around the top turn he got first run on me when he was talking about handouts. Sir, what I want to say is that certainly I have, so far, set out the Ministry against a rationalised approach to the services under the Ministry of Social Transformation, and I will continue on that vein, Sir, by referring back to the document that I want to make a document of this Honourable Chamber, lest we forget; and I will continue along that line systematically, until every aspect of social development in this country is covered.

We have established a committee on technical and social development. I want to repeat that. We have established a Committee on Technical and Social Development. This committee includes representatives from the United Nations Development Programme, the EU, which is the European Union, the Barbados Workers' Union, Economic Affairs, the NGO BANGOR and representatives from the University of the West Indies.

Sir, under the Ministry of Social Transformation we will be setting up an Appeals Committee. This Appeals Committee will consist of five persons. This Committee will take cases of appeal and seek to ensure accountability and that the total services and other resources are provided to every citizen and every community in an equitable and fair manner. This paper will be brought to Cabinet very shortly. It has been long delayed due to, what we cannot get away from in the Ministry, the bureaucracy that always hinders the progress of the fast momentum at which we want to carry the Ministry.

Sir, in my first delivery I spoke of the development plan of a broad social policy and plan of action for the eradication of poverty very loosely. Now I will give a little more in-depth into what we are talking about. The Government of Barbados through the Ministry of Social Transformation and the United Nations Development Programme, to which I spoke about earlier, is currently collaborating to develop a broad-based policy framework which will include recommendations for a comprehensive intervention plan across all sectors of our society, Sir.

This collaborative approach will also undertake the drafting of a national plan of action for the elimination and also the eventual eradication of poverty. This preparatory programme should be concluded no later than August 2000.

Sir, I want to talk a little about the amendment to Cap 230.A of the Landlord and Tenant Act. This is critical and crucial at this point in time, Sir. The Ministry of Social Transformation through its mandate to provide a consistent as alluded to in this Honourable Chamber earlier, will seek to advocate for the amendment of the Act that I talked about, Sir. All research indicates that there are landlords island wide who are exploiting the fact that there is a great demand for low income houses as well as low cost house to rent and are purposely charging exorbitant rates for substandard housing accommodation.

Unfortunately, Sir, persons most affected are the elderly, the very poor and indigent persons for whom the safety net that I am talking about throughout this debate must be provided for under the Ministry of Social Transformation. Sir, in many instances the poor state of housing offered little or no protection to tenants for their possession against theft or burglary.

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Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

It is against that background that the Ministry will carry to Cabinet a Senior Citizen Protection Act. Furthermore, housing in such conditions are hardly insured thereby creating the risk of placing tenants and Government under tremendous pressure in the event of fire, high winds or similar disasters. Certainly, we might have to examine the possibility - it might sound farfetched - of compulsorily insuring all the houses throughout Barbados. We might have to look at it.

Sir, the sole intention of these recommendations are to get the landlords to reset their responsibility to offer reasonable accommodation which meets with national legal requirements, given the demand for housing, thereby avoiding exploitation of tenants, conflict, mistrust, disruption within communities, emotional strain on the tenants and their families and unnecessary pressure for Government.

Sir, there is a lot of hypocrisy being practiced in this country. Old people are not the only people in this country who are poor because poverty transcends age. We have got some very young people who are poor.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, there is also the category of the working poor. When we at the Ministry of Social Transformation go out and try to deal with cases of abject poverty ... there are some people in this country who I have always called hypocrites, who hide inside their houses behind their telephones and call in on the radio programmes to let Barbadians know that the Ministry of Social Transformation does not know what we are doing, that we do not have a policy and that we just gave a young woman a house.

Sir, one of today's edition of the newspaper highlighted the case of a young lady living in abject poverty in St. James. When the Ministry of Social Transformation deals with that case - in fact I instructed the director of the Urban Development Commission (UDC) since that falls within the geographical boundaries of Urban to help this young lady as a matter of urgency - you will then hear talk about how a young lady got help from Urban Development Commission.

Let me say something to you. I been to Danesbury, Black Rock along with the Press - and I talk with the Honourable Member for that constituency, Mark Williams who is doing a fantastic job - and I saw a young lady, 26 years old, working at the top of the gap at a video shop for \$95 a week. When I checked that young lady house, she had absolutely no toilet facility, not even a pit toilet. What she used to do, was to do her business inside the house and put it in newspaper and throw it in the yard. I am using the Bajan jargon now because this is crucial talk. The stench that was there, the Press could not deal with

the situation because obviously it made some of them felt sick to the stomach. When you go and see practical situations like that, how would you respond and how would those persons who hide inside their houses behind their telephones respond?

I have a problem with armchair community workers in Barbados. These are people who sit down in their houses and do not come out to do anything. The Ministry of Social Transformation in conjunction with the churches in Barbados and some of the business sector of Barbados developed a programme called Operation Put Back. When it was launched at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP), many people from within the immediate constituency of St. Michael South East and Barbados also did not turn up.

Sir, the problem is that all of a sudden we have become a nation of persons who want to criticise but do not want to help. That is the problem. I am sorry that I cannot refer to the article, Sir, but it is here, I have the evidence here. It is a serious thing when we start to bracket persons and say that they should not be given any help because they are young. This a serious thing. Any caring human being who really care cannot see abject poverty and do not deal with it. I do not want to go into the long terminology and the sociological terms about that because the bottom line is that once a person wants help, we in the Ministry of Social Transformation, must try to help them. As I said before, this Ministry transcends political boundaries. In this Ministry, we do not we deal with Ds, Bs nor Ns.

For two long this Chamber has become a debating society and this foolishness has got to stop. All persons involved in the sociological process of helping poor Barbadians have to start dealing with the issues as they see them. This is not primarily a job left to the Ministry of Social Transformation and social transformation alone. It is wrong only to criticise the Ministry of Social Transformation without those persons looking at themselves first by asking themselves what contribution they are making.

Sir, when I look into this Honourable Chamber as I come through this door, I see an imagine of Oliver Cromwell. Oliver Cromwell once said that England is not the king, and the king is not England. We as parliamentarians have to understand that. What I am saying is that each and every one of us, once this Head 24 is passed for social transformation, should join together and let us see what ideas we could put together to help the poor and marginalised in our society.

The first time I ever flew so far on an aeroplane because everybody knows that I am frightened to fly, was when I was invited to head the International Federation on Aging. I was very surprised to learn that they are just a few countries in the entire developed and the developing world that have a national policy on aging. Barbados is certainly one that does not have one.

I left Montreal, Canada, came back to Barbados into the Ministry of Social Transformation and I have asked Mr. Trevor Prescod to head a committee on a national policy on aging which basically as our population ages, we will need to have policies and programmes that maximise the capacity of our older people.

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Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

We are asking them to participate and contribute through better health care, education, better retirement, incomes and more flexible employment and caring arrangements. If, however, persons and their families have the flexibility to make choices which will allow them to maximize their participation and contribution to the community, then aging will be about improving our economic well being and not a burden.

Sir, I want at this stage to commend the Barbados Association of Retired ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

At this stage I will tell you that you have two days to speak. I will ask you to wind up now and come again.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

Sir, I would like to commend the Barbados Association of Retired Persons. The reason why I want to commend them, Sir, is when I was in Montreal I met the President, Mr. Ian Archer, and we sat down and worked out in Canada a nice strategy that we could deal with the problem of aging in Barbados. On my return to Barbados, Sir, I am happy to say that BARP, who all of us are getting letters from to agitate to be our representatives on serious matters of aging are sitting on the Committee of the Aging.

Now, Sir, I want to say that against that background in looking forward toward the next century we see many challenges facing Government to ensure that we have better health and educational systems. These systems, Sir, will meet the needs of an aging population and, certainly, the expectations of an increase and well-informed set of persons. I want everybody to join us in the Ministry of Social Transformation so we could get ahead with the social revolution which has begun in Barbados. I will be back later. I have a long time before this debate ends.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Mr. Chairman, every time this administration brings a social programme or opens any social initiative in Barbados, we get the cry from a group of persons that we are trying to create a welfare state in Barbados and that all we do is to give out handouts. That cry usually comes from a group that when they were in office, they cut, they destroyed, they mashed up every single artery, every single vein in the social services of this country.

I want to say that one of the best things that this present administration ever did was to create a disability unit in Barbados. We had disabled people in Barbados from the time there was a Barbados and the first time that a Disability Unit was created in this country was when this present administration saw it fit to do just that so all this talk about the welfare state and what you are doing, look at that one key point that we saw it fit as a Government with a social conscience to set up a Disability Unit in Barbados because there was a need for it, because this is a Government that cares about the vulnerable.

I want to say, though, that I am not convinced that we have done enough in terms of promoting that Unit. I know, Sir, of lesser initiatives where the Press, GIS and so on would have given far more prominence than this particular initiative. I am urging the Ministry of Social Transformation in that regard not to keep their light under any bushel, and make sure that all of Barbados knows about the Disability Unit.

I want to say too, Sir, that the challenges, and I just heard the Minister speak of the challenges in another area, for that Unit are many. There are going to be a lot of challenges for the Disability Unit. It is unfortunate, and I have to say so, that neither the public sector nor the private sector has responded to the Unit as they should. It is a broad and sweeping statement, but it is true.

If we take somewhere like Canada as an example, and those of us who have gone to Canada would know, that you see the restaurants, whether it be a McDonalds, a Kentucky, whatever it is, you will see the sidewalks in Canada being very user friendly for people with disabilities. That is one thing that stands out, certainly, to my mind, when I visit that country.

Indeed, Sir, there is a saying that if "I am to become disabled, I would rather do it in Canada." That saying originated, Sir, because people realised that that country is extremely user friendly where the disabled are concerned. I would love to see Barbados singled out as the country in the region where we are more user friendly where the disabled are concerned. That is a hope. It is a dream.

I believe that the Ministry of Social Transformation is on the right path because it is well within my knowledge that very shortly indeed we are going to have before this House a Green Paper on Disabilities which will be debated in this Honourable Chamber. I am sure that Unit alone is enough indication that the Ministry and the Government are both serious about the vulnerable in our society and, in particular, those with disabilities.

I want to say also, Sir, that since being established, that Unit has made a small dent in employment. I am speaking of the employment of persons with disabilities. The Unit itself, I am aware, actually sets the example because at that Unit we do have some persons with disabilities who are employed there. Employment, however, Sir, remains the primary concern of persons with disabilities. You ask almost all of them about the problems they are having and they will all tell you that they would like to work.

I am going to say something, Sir, which may surprise you, and it is this, that even though I support the whole idea of having the disabled integrated into the world of work, I am also very supportive of first having them trained before they enter the world of work.

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Continuation of Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

I think we should train as many of them as possible. Indeed, we should train if possible all of them who want to enter the world of work because I do not think that we should send the message that we are actually employing them because they have a certificate. I think we want to make people realise that we are employing them because they are capable of work.

From my knowledge, Sir, there are quite a few of them who have not actually worked before. It would be the first time that they are being faced with an employment situation. To throw them on the production line could be very traumatic for them. It is not the easiest thing in the world as it is their first time, some of them may get lost and it can be very challenging and a very daunting task for them.

I believe, Sir, that if we ensure that we equip them with the skills first it would be far easier for them. Of course, that brings me to another point because the reverse of all of what I have said could very well occur and make matters worst. The point is this, if you train them, the moment you train them you are committing yourself to giving them work to do. The worst thing which could happen is to train persons with disabilities and then leave them there without finding work for them. I think that if you do that, you will be making things worst than before.

Indeed, Sir, it hurts me to say that I know that there are people in Barbados with disabilities who are trained in certain specific areas but who up to now cannot find work. All of us know that some of these persons work far better than the 'able-bodied people'. We know that persons with disabilities are not easily distracted and in many cases they give a far more honest day's work and such like.

I do not think that the Ministry of Social Transformation is in any way at fault. Indeed, I believe that the question of persons with disabilities and how we treat them is not the matter of the Ministry of Social Transformation alone. I think it concerns all of us on the Front Bench, all of Barbados. I urge all Ministries to be much more supportive and not to be as inward looking as some of them are and to think about those persons with disabilities and how they themselves can impact on that particular group and make life much easier and more comfortable for them.

Sir, I want to ask every Ministry to pledge their support for those persons with disabilities. I ask them to be sensitive to their needs. I think, for instance, that GIS could be a bit more proactive where these persons are concerned. They could have more programmes, promote the unit more. That is an arm of Government which I think should do a bit more for the disabled. Where transport is concerned we can do a bit more too. There are young children who can benefit from an education but the only thing in their way is that they have a disability and they cannot get from their homes to the school to get the benefit of that education.

I believe that schools like the Challenor School will tell you that they know and they can find in the nooks and crannies of Barbados persons with disabilities who can benefit from schooling at the Challenor School but because of transportation they cannot reach that institution. I am saying that this vast unit itself needs to have its own transportation. Perhaps we can have a situation where the Transport Board would have a particular vehicle for them.

There is also the whole question of housing. I remember asking on more than one occasion for the Ministry of Housing whenever they are building units to make sure that some of the units are made in such a way that they can be acceptable to persons with disabilities. I made that call more than once. I have found out that persons with disabilities in Barbados are in a double bind because of the whole question of accessibility, the type of unit and getting into it, whether it has a ramp and all that but, more importantly, Sir, the mere fact that a lot of persons with disabilities are not working you get the answer that in order to be a tenant you have to be able to pay rent. Therefore, when you apply and you are not working you are never looked at because you have a disability and that is unfortunate. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am calling on all of the Ministries to be a bit more outward looking and reach out to that particular group with jobs a bit more.

In terms of sports, Mr. Chairman, you are the chairman of the National Sports Council at the Ministry, I believe that the time has come when we will have to put on Boards, especially those involved with sports, persons with disabilities so that their interest can be looked after. We have to do it, Sir. We can give them things like tickets to go to watch cricket and sports at the stadium because this is what a lot of them want. We can do it at the Ministry. I think the time has come when we definitely have to do those things.

There is a chap, Wesley Worrell - when we did the National Sports Policy, I think we had two or three meetings - who has represented Barbados at the Para-Olympics and he speaks with a passion about para-olympics. He has been asking for sponsorship for wheelchairs and he has been going to the private sector and there has been very little response. It hurts sometimes to know that these things happen to our disabled. I believe that the private sector has to play its part in helping people like Wesley.

In terms of informatics, we have to realise that our young, blind people at the school are no longer interested in making mops and brooms. Those people want to be on computers. I think that that Ministry can help in this regard. The only thing that people have come to associate the workshop with is the making of brooms and we have to take it a step further. We have to upgrade it now.

I know of a country where the unit which is similar to the Disability Unit has things like Braille Passports and they are kept at the unit and that is where the people collect them. Even in that regard, we

can have Home Affairs - I am looking at what Ministries can do generally - look into matters such as these.

I used to speak about having wheelchairs available to persons with disabilities on loan where we would have about 50 chairs at the Unit. There are some people who will never get a chair because they do not have the wherewithal to get a chair.

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Continuation of Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

I am saying that if we could have these things there where we can loan them...

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Sir, the other thing is true. There are lots of people in Barbados who have passed away who had wheel chairs and the wheel chairs are just there sitting down and the units can do with these chairs. They can loan these chairs out to people with disabilities.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

You have one more minute to wind up.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

Sir, I am not thinking of any fee for the chair. I am just thinking of loaning them and getting them back.

Sir, the point I want to make on education quickly is that when we constructed annexes where we have children with disabilities and so on we did it in an effort to have it integrated with the adjoining school, to have them mix with the children and being part and parcel of one institution but that has not happened, Mr. Chairman. What has actually happened is that the two remain distinct and apart as though I should not go over there, I am not part of that. The mixing and integration that we thought would have happened is not happening at all. I think that instead of serving as a separation and a division we have to make sure that they serve as part of the whole integration process.

What I have tried to do, Mr. Speaker, in the short time that I have had is to make a conscience call. A conscience call, Mr. Chairman, to myself, to other Ministers, to other Ministries, to the private sector and to Barbadians generally to reach out a bit more to those persons with disabilities.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have heard the earlier speakers from this side deal with the philosophical and sociological side of this Ministry and I rise this afternoon to support the Head but I think I will be a lot more anecdotal than philosophical or sociological. First of all, Sir, I must compliment the Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East for a job well done.

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Sir, he worked tirelessly. He is indefatigable in his approach - unflinchingly. Sir, I know his Sabbath begins in just an hour and a half...

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

You do not postpone a Sabbath. He keeps his Sabbath holy but, Sir, he will come out to rescue an ox. In these post industrial and IT days, Sir, we do not deal with oxen but he will come out and do the work necessary as his conscience dictates. I know, Sir, he is going to be here until the close of this evening session since he is a firm believer in the principle that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

Sir, earlier in my platform political days just after 1994 I must have been called out to five fires between November 1994 and June 1995. Each one I went out to there was a certain dehumanising feeling. You turned up to the fire because somebody said to the representative. You give a statement to the fire officer, then somebody will rush and asked you: did you call National Housing? What about National Assistance Board? There are people in the crowd who could rattle them off chapter and verse. Sir, I get just as tired as the victim because I know bright and early the next morning you have to meet that person...

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Yes, if you get a chance to sleep. You have to get that person to the National Assistance Board, down Roebuck Street down Country Road and out by Frank Walcott Headquarters early next morning. Sir, it is a mentally and physically sapping exercise.

When I heard that this Ministry would be so formed and constituted as to bring several if not all of those departments under one umbrella I instantly felt as if a load had been lifted off my shoulder.

It says here in our last Manifesto for the Barbados Labour Party , if you read, for those who have not:

“A new Ministry of Social Transformation will focus on the needs of the poor, disadvantaged and the physically handicap”.

Sir, this Ministry, and the Honourable Member has already highlighted the various department is far reaching and wide sweeping. I would like to focus on just one area and that, Sir, is the area of

community development. The Honourable Member for St. John in his speech made mention of a policy setting goals for a decent lifestyle. Sir, in most of the communities particularly the urban communities there is a basic lack of a community centre or a community resource centre whatever you care to call it. You can say it without thinking, those constituencies which have them. They were fought for particularly on this side very rigorously. Just come into the city and you will see the centres which they have. But that was not done or gained easily. Areas like Bank Hall, Carrington Village and Brittons Hill had no such communities until in recent times.

Sir, I had the pleasure to be at the opening of a community centre in Bonnetts about some six to eight weeks ago. I am sorry, a resource centre at Bonnetts - it is a big difference.

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Sorry, you get so accustomed it is difficult to get it out of your vocabulary. I would like to invite the Honourable Member for St. John when he making his little visits because he has relatives living across Brittons Hill just under Bonnetts right across Villa Road. He did a lot of leg work out there in the last Elections and I would urge him, when he goes back to visit his relatives, to just take a walk across what is known as Brittons New Road and he is in to Bonnetts and go and have a first hand look at that structure which was constructed by the Urban Development Commission which is part of the Ministry of Social Transformation. If he has any doubt he should ask his former candidate for Christ Church West who is a Member of the Bonnetts Community, a Mr. Barrow, what he thinks about that Resource Centre.

5:05 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. T. GILL:

Mr. Barrow was there the same evening because he was calling me weeks before asking me when will this Centre be opened. The people were longing for it. He was overwhelmed by the architecture, by the facilities present at the Bonnetts Resource Centre. The only complaint he had to make is the material from which the front door is made. Everything else he gave us 100% less than 1% or 2%, as a job well done.

I can speak for Mr. Barrow, because he is in constant contact with me, about the urban development and what they can do for Christ Church West. He knows quite well that he no longer has to butt about

and scramble about and look for somewhere, under a piece of tarpaulin propped up with four sticks outside the bread shop to play a game of dominos, be it community, independence or the regular community games.

I like to give figures particularly during Estimates because this is a debate about facts and figures and not about things like a pie in the sky and what you hope to achieve and what you never achieve. That building was built at a cost of \$512 000 and it was built within reasonable time. These are things we do not normally hear. We always associate Government's projects with being protracted and cost overruns and hodgepodge and botch up.

Sir, it is a complete Centre and as I said, I like to give facts and figures particularly in a debate such as this. Between October 5th 1998 and May 14th 1999, the construction was virtually completed. Note, I said virtually. It was habitable but there were certain legal overtones and ramifications that had to be finalised.

I have already stated that it was built at a cost of \$112 000. It can facilitate 185 persons in an auditorium with a stage, area for caterers, washroom facilities, secondary water storage tanks, a necessary pre requisite, air-conditioned computer room and I will speak a little to that, to seat 15 individuals. A library, an office and a meeting room for the residents - you see, you try to involve the commune as much as possible - residents' association meeting facilities and then we have not just left a big concrete structure - plans are there for greening the outside and having provision for swings et cetera, for the little children in the area.

Sir, the mere fact that there is provision for a computer room and computer usage shows that this administration is thinking ahead. Yes, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip North said, you have to go beyond hand crafts and so on. There is facility for drama and dance, but the computer room, Sir, would be indeed of great assistance to the young and the old, but particularly those young people who find it difficult - and the CXC results reflect this, that those children who do not have access to a computer after school, whether it is one at home, or they can go to their parent's office - are the ones who struggle and do very poorly in that subject area.

So, it is a necessary adjunct for these children to have at their disposal the facility of a computer room and computers. It is like a child, no matter how much he or she detests music, having a piano in the house, when you do your RSM theory, whether you want to go the Saturday morning or not, you end up passing because you have the facility at hand. You become adept in its usage.

Sir, it is not only Bonnetts. In a next three to four months time - not quite as splendid, do not have the room for it, and then again it has to accommodate sporting activities - and Mr. Chairman, I would never forget, I took you that location in Gully Hill at Carrington Village and when you go back there you are going to see the pavilion, which we would have discussed some four or so years ago and it has come to fruition.

Again the Urban Development, before I was Chairman - I have to be very clear, before I ever dreamed of being the Chairman - had plans in place and these plans will bear fruit, as I said, in a couple of months time.

Asides.

Mr. D.T. GILL:

It will be completed before his time as well, long before his time. He was only at the Israel Lovell Foundation...

Asides.

Mr. D.T. GILL:

This will be a recreational facility. Already the children are boiling over, they are bubbling, they are effervescent with joy. The roof has just been put on and already they are playing there. They are playing games that would mimic squash against the walls. They are kicking football in the space. They are really excited. It is like giving a toy to a child.

But, Sir, I cannot allow this debate to go by without stating that these are communities that were neglected by the former Democratic Labour Party administration because they said - and they held that view right up until January last year - that if they bring a cat, the people in St. Michael will vote for it and precisely that nothing good can come out Carrington Village.

Sir, those old views slowly died away until they came to stark reality last year and all those areas were neglected because they were seen as strong holes and nothing was done to improve the urban areas with respect to urban recreational facilities or community centres, whatever you care to call them. They miscalculated and misread the electorate and continue to misread and to miscalculate.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Speaker has one minute.

Mr. D.T. GILL:

One minute, only? Sir, that structure will be completed at a cost of \$383 765.

Asides.

Mr. D.T. GILL:

It started only last year April, so again it is being completed within a reasonable time.

Sir, you know, because you have been involved in sport long before you came to this Chamber, the advantages and the purpose of a Club House. You know, Sir, the importance of team sports, but when a Club has a facility in which it could hold annual general meetings, sit and have a post mortem over the game, especially team sports, a place where they can express camaraderie, discuss mutual topics, that group or team usually does very well.

5:15 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. T. Gill:

I have reason to believe that is why the Clapham Bulls Basketball team at Clapham, in my constituency have been doing so well over the years, because they have a common meeting place, which serves as the cradle and now, the crucible, for the improvement of their sport. I will come back, Sir, to matters of similar nature, and you will see the purpose for such structures; but according to the Minister, lest they forget and mismanage and ill-treat the facilities, I would like to remind them that all these facilities must be treated as if they were their facilities, since each and everyone of us, as taxpayers, would have contributed to such fine and splendid structures. Sir, I am most obliged.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. James North

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

Recently a leading Caribbean academic who should clearly have known better spoke of the Ministry of Social Transformation in pejorative terms, either reflecting his ignorance of the true role of this Ministry or exposing his own subjective belief that the Ministry was nothing more than an amalgam of traditional old-fashioned welfare-type organisations swept under a common umbrella. I take exception to the submission by that academic for several reasons. One of the reasons I take exception to that person's remarks was because that person, from his position as an occupant of an academic citadel should really appreciate that in the real world, in ex-colonies, especially ex-colonies that manifest a stratified society there are always not going to be the haves and the have-nots, but there are those in need of special care and protection.

I am also reminded, Mr. Chairman, that after the collapse of the Soviet Union where many countries deliberately tilted right of centre in consequence, we saw a fresh attention again being placed on what ought to be the role of the state. You would have heard my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, spoke clearly in crystal terms of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, or the greatest good for the greatest number, obviously based on the philosophy of John Stuart Mill.

I would like to consider what the Honourable Member for St. Michael East was saying, in circumstances where we contemplate the role of the state. We also consider where we are at this point in our development and we also consider the plight of those whose special conditions and circumstances warrant care and attention.

There is an unfortunate philosophy based on republicanism and conservatism. I believe, part of this philosophy has been informed by a character called Nietzsche. His philosophy lends itself to republicanism and conservatism, He was talking about the minimal state. I have been sent here on three occasions by the people of St. James North. I first came in 1991 and believe you me, between 1991 and 1994 I did not hear the term 'minimal state' in here, but I heard the term 'leaner government' in here,

but after the social services of this country received a battering between 1991 and 1994, one of our members on this side mentioned about leaner. It was not only leaner, it was also meaner. It was mean to lots of people. Many people were marginalised and left out, some of whom have still not recovered.

I remember Nietzsche who talked about this minimal state. Mr. Chairman, what should be the role of the state? The role of the state is to take into account the competing interest of those who live in a stratified society. It should be to regulate, facilitate, educate and rehabilitate where necessary.

I want to compliment my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, who thought that in all this where some of us go astray, whether or not through our own self-imposed misfortune, or misfortune brought on from external elements, that one mistake deserves something in the way of forgiveness.

The role of the state is often to rehabilitate, but not necessarily, Mr. Chairman, at the level where somebody has gone astray like a lost sheep and has transgressed the law and therefore needs to be redeemed. The role of the state should also be to rehabilitate those who have genuinely fallen victims to misfortune. We are an ex-colonial society. We are a stratified society, a society in which not all persons have been able yet to either actualise themselves or to be properly catered for, and even when sometimes we are tempted to think that they have contributed to their own misfortune we have to extend that caring hand.

I am heartened that consistent with the fact that the Ministry of Social Transformation has a clear mission and a clear objective. This Ministry understands that it will cater to the disabled in a greater way than ever before. This Ministry also recognises that it has a clear mandate to look after children in this community who are disadvantaged, and it certainly is. Some of us who live in villages in Barbados are sometimes shut off from the reality of urban life. Some of us in Fryers Well, St. Lucy or Harmony or Pie Corner or Josey Hill, Rock Hall, even Glendenor, may never know the level of abuse that children suffer in metropolitan Bridgetown and the urban areas.

The stresses of inner city living in a small country, have made themselves evident in this Barbados and the Ministry of Social Transformation clearly has that mandate. The Ministry of Social Transformation is going to go places. It is going to do what it can, but in all this too, Mr. Chairman, I think there is a definite role for the Ministry of my colleague here on my left, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. There is a definite role also for my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in her role of manager of education. There is a definite role for many others.

As we take into account those who are marginalised, as happened between 1991 -1994, we do not want a situation to occur where people in a society are left out it and are so ostracised that what sociologists call anomie comes in consistent with Durkheim's theory. We do not want people to drift. We do not want people to feel left out. If you are as a person on the block addressing yourself as the victim of some form of oppression or suppression, you may become ostracised and then engage in antisocial activities which would impact negatively on the culture.

5:25 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

I will want that all of those little children who are being abused are so cared for as to be saved so as not to degenerate under the effect of a problem of low self esteem which would eventually create all sorts of problems.

I also want to welcome the initiatives put forward by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East - and this is important - who has realistically look at the part community centres ought to play in this Barbados. There can be no doubt that in recent years that the traditional 1950 model of the community centre is no more. The idea of putting in a community centre in Crab Hill 1970 style and hoping to put programmes that people would automatically come into them at night for a meeting or come to, has gone.

What the Minister is proposing by way of converting these community centres into resource centres must be welcomed. The schizophrenia in all of this is within the last 25 to 30 years many community centres were not being used because the communities did not understand what they existed for and in any case people retreated inward and ignored them. Yet the schizophrenia manifested itself where many political aspirants knowing full well that many community centres were underutilized would as part of their constituency manifesto proposed a community centre without rhyme or reason and without programmes for the community centres.

The notion of resource centres in the communities is to be applauded. I am sure that once these community centres are properly converted into resource centres with planned activity which are raised consequent upon the definition of proper goals, that we can go places.

Mr. Chairman, I do not subscribe to the view that because many community centres have been emptied that we should not have more. There have been communities in this Barbados that have evolved overtime without community development support at these institutions. I do not know how someone can build a big housing complex somewhere with no pasture, no community centre and with no culture activity. They just set up an institution with potential to convert it into some sort of institutional slum because in their frustrations people cannot access the types of amenities around them that they need as the Honourable the Attorney General would agree.

Mr. Chairman, I also endorse the wholehearted effort of my colleagues in terms of involving community-based organisations in the social development programme of the Ministry of Social Transformation.

Mr. Chairman, I do not know, how much time is left to me but there are a few more concerns that I have.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Six minutes.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Oh, good time. I had made it nine minutes but I will abide by your measurement of time, Mr. Chairman.

Consistent with the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) desire to continue its programme for the good society, we have introduced youth programmes in this Barbados since 1994, ably led by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. The core of these youth programmes was a clear signal that young people have an important part to play in this Barbados. A most innovative programme based on clearly thought out idea was introduced through the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES), a wonderful programme.

This is telling young people that we recognise the enterprise that resides in them and we are prepared to tap it, to challenge it and to move it in the direction of achieving national goals and national programmes. At the same time the young people will benefit in the process.

I would like to say, Mr. Chairman, that this Barbados is not seeing a uniformly, orderly or disorderly bunch of young people. What we are seeing is several different types of young people. We are seeing young people in this Barbados with clear goals who know what they want, who are well behaved, who are well-focused and who will get on. Then you have some young people who are uncertain. They are not at all deviant but rather uncertain and a little bit cynical about the social system. Then you have those young people who really want attention and who have not gone adrift but who crave the opportunity to participate but who are doubtful about whether the support system around them is really available. Then you have those young people who have gone the way of crime and drugs.

I believe that the Ministry of Social Transformation should look closely at this whole question of the threats to young people. Drug addiction is a very serious thing. The Attorney General had on more than one occasion indicated to this country a multi-faceted approach to the control of drugs including such policies as prevention from entry to Barbados, policing of the problems and a whole host of other things.

I am speaking, Mr. Chairman, about the need for us to wake up to the reality that those poor young people who have fallen victim to addiction, who have got involved in crime, in stealing, in anti-social behaviour, disrespect for institutions and the health problems that they present to themselves are people who are in need of special care. Addiction is now universally recognised as a frightening illness driven by compulsion and craving which is very difficult to break from. We have to realise that we some sick people out there.

I heard of a young man who died in the City of Bridgetown recently at the age of 39 who was a victim of some form of addiction. I have met him briefly about 20 years ago. He was absolutely gifted and bright but his life was overtaken and overturned by addiction.

Can it be that in this Barbados, our human resources have been badly threatened by poverty, by deprivation occurring overtime and also by such threats as addiction? The answer must be a clear yes. We are hopeful that the majority of our young people still have their heads on and are still focused and ready to work with the Government to the development of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I started by saying that my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East

made reference of the philosophical position of John Stuart Mill in the context of the greatest happiness for the greatest number. I have also rejected that Barbarian Nietzsche who spoke about the minimal state as I referred to the fact that we have minimum Government in Barbados between 1991 and 1994 when the social services took a battering.

What I want to say in the context of all this Government is doing in the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Attorney General's Chamber, Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Transformation and the other ministries is that we are convinced that when a Government is planning for its people and presenting its programmes it should capture the spirit of the people, the norms that drive the society.

There was a philosopher called Savigny. He spoke about the Volkgeist which being interpreted is the spirit of the people. He was saying that consistent with a society yearning to express itself, it should depend on that spirit of the people. We have in this Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Government seen a manifestation of how the spirit of the people and the initiatives that drive can be harnessed to carry the people forward. We also know that this country has been succeeding in consequence of the hard work that generations of Barbadians preceding us have put in to build this Barbados.

We believe that in a situation where there are some segment of the community that may still claimed to be marginalised that ministries such as what we are looking at today have a pivotal role to play to encourage our youth and to protect our old. My colleague made mention to a proposal for ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member has got one minute.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

I am going to support that as indeed as I am going to support every programmes and sub-programme under my colleague's Head.

This is a time when we have to realised that international institutions said that between 25 000 and 30 000 people could be hard hit by what Oscar Lewis called the culture of poverty.

5:35 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

He claimed that when there is a culture of poverty people feel excluded from society, do not take part in major institutions, they pursue loose sexual unions, they are under-achievers and such like. Now if Lewis is right, and Lewis was considered to be as conservative as Nietzsche, if he is right and we have remnants of the types of scenes that Lewis was depicting as being characteristic of the culture of poverty, then we through our Poverty Eradication Programme, which is again being led by this Ministry, will be able to pick up the information, and to devise the types of policies to deal with this spectre of the culture of poverty and get it eradicated.

As I close, Mr. Chairman, one of the beautiful things about the Urban Development Commission Act is its commitment and encouragement for us in this country to deal with every vestige that adheres to or derives from the slum culture. I would like to see the day come, Mr. Chairman, when we have no more slums and no more slum-like behaviour in this country. I thank you.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Chairman, I too would also like to lend my support to the Ministry of Social Transformation, the work that the Ministry has done over the last few months in such a short space of time and the proposed work of the Ministry of Social Transformation in this period of 2000-2001.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to state at this time that before I should waste any time on the opponents on the other side, or before we should waste any time on this side on those folk on the other side, to establish clearly what I have discovered.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I would ask the Honourable Member to refer to members on the other side as Honourable Members.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy and the Honourable Member for St. John, who is not in his chair.

In January, 1999 there were Manifestos of the two parties that were issued. I looked at the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party which carries 32 pages, Sir. Nowhere in this Manifesto is there any statement in relation to the movement in terms of social transformation and a better standard of living for the poor people of this country, whether they are young, senior citizens or the disabled. Nowhere in this Manifesto have I seen anything in relation to that situation of social transformation.

I can tell you what I have found. On page 4 of the Manifesto, it shows you clearly that this side should not lose wind in trying to put a case as far as the Opposition is concerned because I have found on page 4 of their Manifesto - and I am coming this way before I go into social transformation and the work it has been doing -, which I believe is a document of this House, let me state clearly in this paragraph:

“If we do not act now, the middle class will be wiped out and there will be a return to the pre-1930s.”

The Democratic Labour Party is telling you in their Manifesto on page 4 that they are putting a case for the middle class, but that is not all, not poverty stricken people, not poor people, but for the middle

class.

On page 18, Sir, of the same Manifesto under the signature of the Leader of the Opposition and a portrait of photographs of the family, it states clearly:

“The difference in this election is that the Democratic Labour Party will invest (listen carefully) ... help the middle class.”

So how can I stay here and expect to hear the Honourable Member for St. Lucy or the Honourable Member for St. John talk about poverty when in truth and in fact their case is to put a fight for the middle class of Barbados, a clear commitment to the middle class of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, it also surprises me that the only place in the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto that the word “urban” is mentioned, and I would like to draw to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy's attention to the fact that the only place in the Manifesto that the word “urban” is written is under this caption:

“Dennis St. Elmo Kellman, Democratic Labour Party candidate for St. Lucy, has been Shadow Minister of Rural Development, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development.”

It is the only place.

I shall now get on with the work of the Ministry of Social Transformation. What I am impressed with, Mr. Chairman, is in a short space of time, what I have found out is that over 199 housing lots have been allocated under the Urban Development Commission. Mr. Chairman, if you calculate those 199 house spots by an average of four persons to a house, you have almost 739 people in this country who somewhere along the line were not sure of owning a home.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. That maths cannot be correct. The Honourable Member is misleading the House with his maths.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

They are just rough figures.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

But they cannot be rough. They are far from rough.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Chairman, I said an average. You would also understand clearly that I am expecting your interruption so I am fully prepared for it. Today you are operating off a battery and it is likely that your battery will go dead during the time that I am talking, so do not let us waste any time.

If you look at this, Mr. Chairman, the important aspect of this is that somewhere along the line these families at a later date in their lives ... you have had urban Barbados. For almost an average of 20 years the Democratic Labour Party controlled urban Barbados and nowhere has the Democratic Labour Party

made any provision for the poverty-stricken people of this country in urban.

There were problems facing the tenants as far as the landowners are concerned, problems facing urban Barbados where some people live under conditions that were degrading, where people had to go to the outside in order to ease themselves and problems where some people were exploited in terms of land rent and in terms of house rent.

You have a situation where now under the Ministry of Social Transformation some of these very people who would presently be owning lots and owning homes would be able at a later date to say to that young child in that house at Mummy's or Daddy's death, you do not have to worry. There is a house, a cover over your head.

5:45 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

For too long in this country we have been made to believe that the Opposition, the Democratic Labour Party, cared, when in truth and in fact they have not cared. That is why I have to stand here today and give clear comfort to the Ministry of Social Transformation of the Party to which I belong.

We will improve the range of all benefit payments to the elderly, the physically and mentally challenged. Do you understand what we stand for? The new social transformation will focus on the needs of the poor, the disadvantaged. That is giving people an opportunity. We have not said middle class. We have not turned to a situation where we are looking at one group of people and saying this is where we are going to put our strength and our energies.

Not only that, when you look at the Ministry of Social Transformation and the work it has done, and you look at what we consider to be road improvement in urban Barbados. When it comes to roads, when it comes to improvement this is what the Ministry of Social Transformation is all about.

I have benefited so I have to say thank you. I have benefited in the sense that when I look at places like Danesbury which during the by-election of 1997 the condition that the people of Danesbury lived in was discovered. I am proud today to say that apart from getting compliments from the people of Danesbury, I am now getting complaints that the cars are driving through Danesbury too fast so they are asking for silent police.

Mr. Chairman, I am really proud that this Government has seen it fit to improve the living conditions of the people of Danesbury.

The other important aspect of this is that there have been people in this country who, for years, at some point in their lives, never knew who had owned the piece of land that they were living on. We know that in urban Barbados there is a situation where people have died and wills have not been made. We know of situations in Barbados where people live on tenantry lands and have not been able to pay rent because

they do not know who to pay rent to. We know of cases where somewhere along the line there have been family disputes with land and because there have been disputes one member of the family has been told not to pay the rent to the other member of the family so they have been in limbo.

Because of the Ministry of Social Transformation proper research has been carried out. For example, I had a case where a constituent of St. Michael North East came in my office and asked me if I could be of assistance to her in obtaining a piece of land. I found out where she was living and I investigated and three weeks later I was proud that the lady walked back in to my office with a letter from Urban Development Commission telling her to come in and settle the situation with the land. That is what the Ministry of Social Transformation is about. I would like to compliment the representative of St. Michael North East for working hard to give those people of Alleyne's Land the right to own the property which they have lived on for almost 40 years.

In Straker's Tenantry, Black Rock, there is an old gentleman who has been on that land for as much as 55 to 60 years. I am happy to say that there are 28 housing lots in Straker's Tenantry and it is pleasing for me to drive there to hear those people say that at last they can now leave something for their children.

So when one stands up in this Honourable Chamber and is critical of the work that is being done by the Ministry of Social Transformation I do not think that one is honest in the sense that when you look carefully at some of the work they have done under the National Assistance Board and under Welfare, there are young people in this country who, because of the family situation have been poverty stricken, their water cut off, electricity.

It hurt my heart when I was told last week that in St. Michael West a young lady from a family which is extremely poor is benefiting from the work of the Urban Development Commission so that their living condition can change and the Opposition can tell me that we are wasting money on young people. Poverty does not lie in age.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member has one minute.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

As I prepare to sit down and I will be back up later on based on the fact that I have driven through the City and the Honourable Member for the City could tell you that it was heartburning to see those beautiful homes which are provided by Urban Development Commission in certain parts of the City.

I have driven through Christ Church West and when I look at the work that was done by the Urban Development Commission in Christ Church West I am extremely comfortable that this Government is serious in improving the conditions and the lifestyles of poverty stricken people.

When I look at the work that is being done by this Ministry of Social Transformation in terms of the Disability Unit where there was a situation in which disabled people in this country were ignored. Today, Mr. Chairman, the disabled people have a voice and at least people to listen to them.

I will be back and I am saying that I will continue to read the manifesto of the Democratic Labour

Party based on the fact that I have found almost 26 people who do not seem to be living.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

It is regrettable that some of us cannot understand the role of the Ministry of Social Transformation. It is clear to me that one of the greatest errors that was made was when this particular department was given a floating Ministry. Let me explain because some people will jump up and say that I do not want my honourable friend from St. Michael South East to be a Minister.

One must understand that this Ministry cuts across so many Ministries. It is regrettable that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has been thrown into a Ministry and has not been given the opportunity to truly represent his ability.

When one listens to the sports programme that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East presented before this Parliament since 1994, the mini stadiums, creating a sports programme to get the guys off the block, to recognise the fact that the sports programme if it is developed in the right way could be one of the most profitable things for young people in Barbados, one must ask oneself why is it that we are here looking at the Ministry of Social Transformation and we are not discussing a department somewhere in the Prime Minister's Office that has the power and the ability to cut across all the Ministries. I will explain what I am talking about.

Take a situation where the Ministry of Housing deals with a large number of house spots, a large portion of land but that Ministry sees itself as a department for building houses where the contractors move in, build the houses and when they are completed the same groups of people put them in houses and there is no relationship between the person in the house and the person next door.

If that policy was coming from the Ministry of Social Transformation what you would have got instead is the ability to go and buy those house lots, someone would be able to go the bank and be able to get their neighbours or individual contractors who will go on site when they are building those houses. The guy next door might not have a hut but he might have to ask the person on the other side to store the cart, the trowels, the tools from the masons and carpenters, and automatically a relationship is built up.

If a person is living on that land and they have a house there and another person sets about to build a house and they do not have up their hut as yet and they come next door to borrow electricity or something, a relationship is built between the workmen and also the owner of that particular land and you build a community from there.

5:55 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

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

But instead we are getting a situation here in Barbados, where all the houses are built, and like cattle, the people are placed in the houses and there is no relationship. I am saying that if the Ministry of Social Transformation was allowed to seek and give advice, let us say to the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Tourism, all the other productive Ministries, you would have been able to gel a policy that translates right through the productive sectors and also the social sectors of Barbados.

It is okay to talk about having a committee, but that committee must have the power to act. Anybody who understands Government and understands how Ministers act when certain things happens, one understands that it would be difficult for a Minister who has a portfolio for the Ministry of Social Transformation to go the Minister of Housing and tell him, look, your policy is wrong. He is going to feel that he is the same Minister as the Minister of Social Transformation and he does not want to listen to that Minister. So, I am saying that by setting up this Ministry, the Government has lost a golden opportunity to capitalise on what it set up to do in the initial stages. I am telling you when the Honourable for St. Michael South East left the Democratic Labour Party and went to the Ministry of Finance as an advisor to the Prime Minister on social affairs, that was the right step, but the error was made because some members in Cabinet got jealous because of the perks that came with that position, and a Ministry was created and destroyed a good opportunity for the Prime to get the relevant information and advice that he could then take to Cabinet and transcend right across the Ministries. So what we have today is a Ministry that can only half deliver its total package, when the person doing the job previously had the opportunity to have the ear of the Prime Minister, who could take that advice and command Cabinet to implement certain policies within the various Ministries. What do you have today? A Minister sitting here, one sitting there one there, one there. Thirteen different minds doing thirteen different things with thirteen different policies.

I am saying that the Ministry of Social Transformation is so important that there needs to be able to have the command that he can dictate policy and that policy should be the policy for all the Ministries that affect that particular Ministry. This makes sense. Anybody who is prepared to take it to its logical conclusion would understand exactly what I am talking about. Let me give you a good example of what I am talking about. When free secondary education was implemented in this country it went alright across Barbados and everybody in Barbados stood the opportunity of gaining. When people in here and talk about the Democratic Labour Party, that it has not done anything for people, they cannot blame the Democratic Labour Party. What they must do is blame themselves for not taking advantage of the situation. I am saying that this Ministry has the capacity to do a lot for Barbados but the Barbados Labour Party has played wrong with this particular policy and if it continues in this mode it will not go far enough.

I also want to say that I have heard a lot about resource centres. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East would tell you, I know he would admit it that a resource centre started in Crab Town at a place called North Stars. The same concept that will be implemented by the Ministry of Social Transformation is already being implemented at the North Stars of Crab Hill, St. Lucy. I congratulate the Minister for seeing something good and running with it. I want you to know that the wisdom comes from the North and we are prepared to share it with anybody. When we found ourselves in a situation where we found certain problems within St. Lucy, we did not wait on the Ministry of Social Transformation to come forward. What we did, we went at Rockfield and rebuilt the community Centre. We also went at Crab Hill and built the one ...

Aside:

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

No problem, I don't worry about that. That is a natural thing. It is not about self, once the work is done and the people know the ones that have contributed to the work, I am not bothered. It is not important to me. The important thing is that the work has been done. Neither would you have heard that I have created two town, Moon Town and Crab Town, but that is of no importance. The important thing I want is that people are gaining. That is what I am happy about. That is what I call social transformation where an MP is prepared to go in and change the atmosphere to the benefit of the people in the particular area.

Aside:

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Development will not come to St. Lucy by the Government of Barbados but I am telling you that the MP for St. Lucy is committed to what he promised the people in 1994 and if it means that the MP has to do it on his own he will do it. Even if he has to look for investors for the airport and the hotels down there he will do it too. That is why you see that St. Lucy is different. That is why you can leave any place in Barbados and go to Fryer's Well Beach, because the MP for St. Lucy understands what is social transformation. That is why he does not block the access to the beach because the people of St. Lucy must get something that is different from the others.

Aside:

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

You are too privileged, you go to the North, you do not watch local television, you watch Cable. Watch CBC for once and you will see and hear about Crab Town and Moon Town.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that things like house spots, house repairs, sports teams coming together and building a unit to get the fellows off the block and get them in perspective. That is what it is all about. The day when I can walk Barbados and I can see the youngsters being involved in this, I can tell anybody that social transformation is working and it is doing exactly what the Minister set out to do.

The Minister cannot do it by himself. There are certain Ministers who will have to understand that the social transformation policy will affect their Ministries and they must be prepared to accept this policy and make sure that Barbados gets what it deserves. That is what I am saying. I cannot understand and

will never understand, why it is that for so long we have been playing football in this country and we cannot yet beyond the first round. I am saying that this also must be a policy for the Ministry of Social Transformation. They must implement a proper sports programme to give hope to the youngsters who find themselves on the block and those youngsters who have found their talent.

6:05 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

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

I want you to understand that most of those fellows you see sitting on the block, if you were to organise a proper football programme, you will see all those fellows off the block actually taking part in the game and watching the game. So if it means that there is something that interest them that is productive, it is the Government's role to make sure that they do the necessary to keep the minds jelling and I am prepared to give you the advice free.

It is clear that those guys like football and the Ministry of Social Transformation must be prepared to vote some money in their vote to get the fellows actively involved in sports of that kind. Because, if it is football that is going to move them from off the block, it must be football that is going to solve the particular problem in this country.

If you can get them off the block and playing football, then you have an aspect of controlling them and it means, Sir, that the Attorney General's Ministry must be prepared to give up some money so that we can also get a proper sports programme because I can assure you, Sir, that once that proper sports programme gets going that...

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I hate to interrupt, my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy but in agreeing with his point about sports and getting the youth involved in football, I would like the Honourable Member to know, Sir, that only last week the Ministry of Social Transformation completed

a sports programme, which we call a gateway programme using sport as particularly the medium of the discipline of football, using the communities of Pineland, Gall Hill in St. John and Eden Lodge. These three communities are using this concept which I will take about later, using sports as a gateway for social and other interactive development.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I would ask the Honourable Member to wind up now.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

It shows that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has not lost his touch and I would say, Sir, that instead of letting them be for poor areas. I am talking about a programme for Barbados where every single person on the block will be targeted and to make sure that this programme is not a programme where they come and kick ball and they are just playing for fun. It must be something that at the end of the day they can see something positive from it that they will be prepared to gravitate to higher heights.

I will also be important sometimes for the same Ministry to bring people like Dwight York to Barbados to have a chat with these same fellows when the programme gets going to tell them how he got where he is today. Because those guys see people like Dwight York as their role models and we need to utilise those persons.

I am grateful to you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Thank you.

On the motion of Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour the SPEAKER, and asked for leave to sit again. Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 630 p.m. today.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this House be now suspended until 6:30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

6:10 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken, this House was in Committee of Supply, to that it will now revert.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

This House is in Committee of Supply. The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the Ministry of Social Transformation has an important role to play in Barbadian society at this junction.

Mr. Chairman, when one looks at what is happening in our society today, one recognises that there is a need for an institution of Government to help not only to put the Government programme but help to reorder the society. The Barbadian Society which is part of the Caribbean society and part of the world society, over the last decade or even beyond seems to have gone, not necessarily astray, but values and a number of things that affected the society in gone days, seem to me to be a thing of the past.

Therefore it is necessary for us to reorder the society and people talk about the values that we used to see, today. We need to bring these values to the society. We talked about values that were taught in the home, values that were taught among the family and therefore the need for this Ministry to help the family, to help the church and school and of course to help the other institutions that help to make up our society. That is why I believe the Ministry of Social Transformation has been looking at programmes to help the family, to help the home and to help other institutions to develop in a modern way.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that programmes such as parenting, programmes to help parents get over some of the difficulties that we now face, especially in the poor societies of the urban areas. I have gone through the urban areas, Sir, I do not represent an urban community, but I have gone through the urban corridor with other Members of this Parliament and I have seen situations that do not exist in the country areas. I have seen situations of derelict housing. I have seen absolute poverty and I believe that this Ministry should spend more of its resources to help uplift the family in the urban area.

I believe that there is a need not only for programmes, but there is a need to alleviate poverty. There are a number people who still go to sleep hungry and we need to spend this money wisely.

People talk about getting help from welfare and getting help from the National Assistance Board, but we need to spend more money, not necessarily educating, because I think that we need to spend more money in providing the basic necessities. I think we need to spend money in providing at least the minimum housing requirement, things that the Ministry of Housing could not provide. We must understand that we are not talking about welfare state, but surely, you have people that need proper beds, proper cooking utensils, proper plates and so on, at least the minimum. There are still people in the City that walk on dirt floors. We need to eliminate these sorts of things. Running water, toilet facilities, all these are things that happen within the City. Garbage collection, I believe I went quite recently with the Member East in the Belle area and a number of homes exist on our water table, where there is a need for proper garbage collection.

I believe that the Ministry of Social Transformation should look carefully at these situations. They do not exist to that extent in rural Barbados. You will not find something like this in St. Lucy or St. George or St. Philip, but wherever there is a large population. One of the things that we have noticed in large cities that you have a problem in garbage collection. You have a problem with crime and violence. You have problems of this nature because of the situation that exists that people live in very poor conditions. Despite we have a beautiful society, despite we have a society that is doing very well, I believe that there are still some pockets of poverty that we need to cater to.

I believe that is where the Honourable Minister is trying his best to eliminate. We would not be able to eliminate total poverty, but something has to be done and we have to do it very quickly. I believe too that a number of cases must be put to the families that people must learn and be taught that they must care their surroundings. Too many people, even though they may be poor, do not take care of their surroundings.

6:35 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000.

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Too many people, even though they may be poor, do not look after their surroundings. They do not keep their surroundings clean. You may be poor, Mr. Chairman, but I believe that you still should be able to look after your surroundings and keep it clean and free from water where mosquitoes can breed, free from garbage where rats and other vermin can breed and multiply. I think that we need to get back to the basics at this time.

I hope that the focus especially in the urban corridor would be looking at minimum shelter for the poor person that the Ministry of Housing cannot reach. Clothing - I know there are other institutions like the Salvation Army and other institutions of that nature that help to provide clothing for the poor. At the same time the Ministry must reach out. I know they do not have endless money but with proper programmes in place to help I believe that we will be doing a world of good in eliminating poverty and helping to teach persons and families the values which once exists in the society.

We also need, Mr. Chairman, to teach people to be productive. I think that many people in our society still do not understand that in order for a society to go forward, it must be productive. Too many people do not produce in the society even though they may be operating on the edge of society and are poor I believe that there need to be some industry that will attract and help that these people can go to work. I know it will be hard for persons without proper homes to even go into a cottage industries. I do not believe they can go into cottage industries but we need to find more jobs around the city. Years ago, as a boy growing up, I used to see a number of persons pushing carts around the city where one could get a job doing some odd jobs and running errands as porters. I am not sure that these jobs exists anymore. We must find a way of helping those persons at the lower end to find some meaningful occupation. You used to find jobs at the hardware store running errands and so on.

Mr. Chairman, I know there is a food programme that is now conducted by Meals on Wheels and other programmes that exists. I am not sure how successful it is but I still see some people in the city, not on a large scale, but I still see a number of people, young men especially..

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

I believe most of them are unstable who still go into the garbage and collect food. We need to look at these things. I believe that we have been looking in the Ministry of Housing for accommodation for the homeless. There is still need to provide more accommodation for the homeless in the city. We need to look at an institution to provide this and I would be willing to meet with the Minister to look at a situation where we can acquire some land in the city to provide some opportunities for those persons who are still homeless. There are still people sleeping around. I understand that most of them are not from the city but they come to the city. We know that cities are like - very attractive. Mr. Chairman, I believe that we have to try to eliminate this.

I also feel, Mr. Chairman, that areas like Greenfields and Nelson Street that we need to do something to those. The areas around the Central Bank, the Ministry of Housing and the Central Bank of Barbados will soon clear that area. We will soon be resiting persons from around the Central Bank of Barbados. Already money has been committed already by the Central Bank of Barbados through the Ministry of Housing to help develop that area and beautify it and so on. Most of the people will be resited to the Lower Burney's area.

We have to do something about Greenfields. There are still a number of people who live there and on the Moravian Cemetery. A study must be carried out to find out how we can help to improve and renew that area. We are thinking of a complete renewal of the Greenfields' area. I would hope that we can do that through the Poverty Alleviation Fund. I note that in these Estimates today that the Minister has at his disposal over \$9 million for poverty alleviation. That is one of the areas that I would want the Minister to focus on and he will get some assistance from the National Housing Corporation because we are building a spanking building next door to Greenfields and National Housing Corporation is committing \$100 000 this year to do a study of Greenfields. We believe that something can be done in that area and we will start it with a study.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member has one more minute.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Sir, I will come back. Also the London Bourne area. There is need to be a greening. Only yesterday afternoon I was looking through the city and where the fountain and monument are, it looks very impressive and something can be done to help to green the city. That should be a priority this year.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have been in this Chamber for many years and have lived through a period of social revolution in Barbados. During those years, certainly in an earlier administration and you will still hear it today we were told from time to time that we were over investing in the social sectors, particularly in the years when it was clear that sugar was very much going to be on the decline and that our fledgling industrial sector was looking shaky. In the days before we had yet properly launched the international financial services sector, tourism was, despite ourselves, beginning to flourish. We were told, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that we were overly investing in the social sector and that we need to be investing more in the productive sectors.

I started my civic existence, as I like to put it, very much in the NGO world. In the years when I am not in Government I always go back to my NGO base - this is at the interface with the grass roots. I take my social nourishment from that. I have always felt, Mr. Chairman, Sir, and I will always be of the view and the clear understanding that the social sectors are productive sectors as well. These are the sectors which underpins the productive sectors. If you want a well educated, healthy appropriately housed and properly trained work force to fuel the productive sector, you would obviously have to be depending on the social sectors.

6:45 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

It pleases me greatly that I have lived to see coming full circle in a Barbados Labour Party (BLP) administration an attempt to bring about what was popularly described in the early 1900's as poverty alleviation. For the first time in the history of Government in Barbados, this current administration of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) established a Ministry called the Ministry of Social Transformation. This Ministry came into being so that the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) could come to a place in our development in this country where we could give an undertaking to the people of Barbados that we would not only alleviate poverty but rather eradicate poverty.

Mr. Chairman, I am one who has always believe that this was well within our competence to do. We have the capabilities to do this. We have the capacity to do this. In my years of active representation in this Parliament I have had the privilege - it is a rare privilege - to represent the City of Bridgetown.

Many illustrious persons before me have had that privilege as well. A National Hero in the person of Samuel Jackman Prescod, the first coloured to sit in this House, represented the City of Bridgetown.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

He was called coloured in those days. Know your history.

Asides

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

In those days, that is what he called himself. So do not try to teach me the history of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, many illustrious persons have represented this City of Bridgetown. It was difficult certainly when I came to the City to be able to recognise in our capital city any monumental or any developmental trend. I am not talking about commercial or business Bridgetown. I am not talking about Broad Street and Swan Street. I am talking about the Bridgetown where my constituents lived. I am talking about New Orleans; Chapman Lane; King Street; Chapman Street; Lightfoot Lane; Spruce Street; Wellington Street; Beckwith Street and River Road. That is the Bridgetown that I am talking about.

I remember when I first came to the City hard on the heels of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. He came in here in February of 1976 and I came in here in May of 1976. I remember taking the late Tom Adams in the course of the bi-election of 1976 to places in the City that shocked him and he was very concerned - just as the Honourable Minister for housing now is greatly concerned - that there existed a level of poverty and underprivileged existence in our capital city such as you do not see anywhere else in Barbados.

When I first came to the City there was a house - I have a photograph of it on the brochure in the bi-election that I put out with the late Tom Adams, our now Attorney General and myself in a photograph standing outside a house which was inhabited, if you could call it a house, by a lady popularly known as "Poochin" who is still very much alive.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

Her house had a dirt floor and a rickety makeshift table outside with a few enamel utensils turned down on the table.

The people from that part of Cats Castle had to go to the communal baths in Watkins Alley. That meant that they had to walk across Reid Street to get to the public bath there to be able to bathe.

In the uptown area where the London Bourne Towers now exist, there were communities living in what was known as barracks now immortalised in a painting by Omowale - I think. These were huge houses, two and three storeys, wooden. When I first went in there to canvass, every door had a padlock on it. That meant that every door represented a household of many. One room housed many. Those

people bathe in the public bath at Waterloo Alley which I am happy to say is no more. They had a communal cooking arrangement in the yard outside. That was the City of Bridgetown in 1976.

Mr. Chairman, you would not be surprised then that I would have identified housing conditions as the number one priority in the City of Bridgetown. It is not that I have not sought to do other things. It pleases me greatly today that I can say that there are no longer dirt floors in the City of Bridgetown and there is no longer any building in which people lived which can be described as barracks.

I well remember having identified housing, and going to the then Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the then Minister of Housing to say I could not depend nor wait on the National Housing Corporation (NHC) or whatever is the Government housing programme. The City of Bridgetown was then the only constituency in Barbados where there was no public housing.

We identified the site. I struggle. I am happy to say that I was able to save some beautiful mahogany tree then too and Kensington Lodge came into being.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

Kensington Lodge is a beautiful place with nice driveways. I did not want any 'Jerry-built' houses for the people of the City of Bridgetown. I eat Sunday lunch there on a regular basis.

In another administration in 1981, like Oliver Twist, I was shameless. I went back with my bowl and I said more, I must have more. By that time, plots of land were identified. I know what it is to walk and look at everyone and tell the people that this is something that has to be done. Nobody quarrelled and said that they did not want to sell their house and they did not want the Government acquiring it and so on. They understood that a better quality of life was what we were seeking for them and the first phase of the Pondside started.

We went into Opposition, but I did not stop there. We came back into Government in 1994 and the first thing I said to the Prime Minister and the then Minister of Housing was more, more. The land has already been acquired and that is how London Bourne Towers came into being.

In all of those years I was working on Cats Castle. Now, people do not know where Cats Castle is. Cats Castle is that place between Mason Hall Street and Reid Street. There are a number of substandard houses wedged into that area. That is where 'Poochin' lives.

Many years ago, a plan for the urban renewal of that entire district was made. That is going back to the late 1970's. I still have copies of it in my house. I will keep them forever. Twenty years later I am happy to say that the Urban Development Commission (UDC) now located in the Ministry of Social Transformation is in process of preparing habitable housing in that environ of what is known as Cats Castle. People who lived there do not like it to be called Cats Castle. There is a little conglomeration of alleys that when you drive along Mason Hall Street you do not know that they exist. Alleys such as Spooner's Alley and Bull's Alley. You understand, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

6:55 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

If nowhere else in Barbados, in such a small area so compact that you could say that over a period of 30 years that we have seen a social transformation, with the naked eye you can see it, it is in the City of Bridgetown. That process is an ongoing one.

I belong to a Labour Party, Mr. Chairman, which, going back to the 1950s understood this balance between the social and the productive sectors. We have never apologised and never will to anybody, I believe that is true of the party sitting on the other side as well, for this monumental investment that we have made in the social sectors. It is paying a handsome dividend today.

Barbados is not the envy of many developing countries both inside and outside of this region for nothing or by chance. We pay a heavy price for it. We can see what our taxes buy. When I go abroad and I tell people that we have free education, primary, secondary and tertiary, they look at me in awe. It does not exist anywhere else in the world. When I say to people that we have access to health care, primary, secondary and tertiary and that we have a drug service, they are amazed. It happens nowhere else in the world, not even in the mighty United States of America, not even in Russia, or in any of the countries which claim to be the home of socialism. It does not even happen in the most oil rich countries of the world because some of the most abject poverty can be found even in those countries.

We believe, Mr. Chairman, that we can eradicate poverty. Mind you, there is a poverty in this region. There is a poverty in the Americas. There is a poverty in other parts of the world that we do not know about. We only hear about poverty, but even that spectre of it which still stalks our Barbados, we are determined that in a new era, on the eve of a new century, of a new millennium, that we can create in this little Barbados which is described so often as a more developing country, that we can create in this hemisphere, we cannot say in the world because Singapore has achieved this already, but we can say in this hemisphere where we live that we will create Barbados as the first small developed country. We are well on the high road to doing that, but there is a social component there. There is a process of transformation which is not going to happen by itself. It is a process which has to be put in place. At the interface between a post mortem Barbados and a traditional Barbados, many will still slip through the cracks. In the process of progress, as it is known, many fall by the wayside.

We have a small homogenous society, a population of just over a quarter million people. This is very durable and I am happy that I am living in Barbados because all of us in here could have chosen to live

somewhere else. There are more Barbadians living outside Barbados than in Barbados. All of us could have done well, been successful and living a good quality of life somewhere else but we have all chosen to make our lot and to give back to this small community that nurtured us.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member has one minute to wind up.

Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER:

It is a pleasing thing, Mr. Chairman, that we are living in Barbados at a time when there are still some of us who can look back on the pre-social revolution in Barbados, Barbados of the 1920s and 1930's and a generation now which does not know of those things, and this is how life is, can be looking forward now to a Barbados in the 21st century which has, by its own boot traps, pulled itself out of that social morass.

There is a great deal more that I would so much wish to say on this subject but I will seek further opportunity. I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Chairman, I just want to add to the points that I had made earlier. I know the Minister is anxious to respond but I assume that his will be the last presentation for tonight.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I do not think so. I believe we will have to come back Monday.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I think, Mr. Chairman, Sir, even though I did not hear the debate, that I perhaps would like to identify some critical issues that the Ministry of Social Transformation should be looking at. What I am concerned about is not that we have a situation where you have a Ministry, but essentially it is simply administering the same departments which have existed in Barbados since the 1960s.

In other words, I think that we have to make sure that the words "social transformation" mean more than just an appendage to a Ministry which just does the same thing that the previous Ministries did. Way back we had the Ministry of Social Development in the days of Dr. Caddle. Then you came up and had the Ministry of Welfare. In my time they were calling it the Ministry of Community Development, but it does, in fact, go further than that.

Aside.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I started the Youth Service. You forget that, and I can point to many things. You all said I loitered for the entire time I was in office when, in fact I restructured - privatisation, restructuring the sugar sector, all the things you came and benefitted from but you said I loitered. I do not mind that because I do not believe that a Minister has to pass legislation to be doing something. He has to declare his policy.

`Aside.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I have to be careful. The legislation is important because the legislation that gives rights to people, particularly the workers, is critical, but I am not dealing with that now, Mr. Chairman. Let us focus on what some of the critical constraints to a very positive social transformation policy are.

The first is the question of lack of opportunities to work. I think that the Ministry of Social Transformation has to pay very special attention to the very worrying statistics about the large number of women who are unemployed in Barbados. We know that men are getting jobs in the construction sector and apparently jobs in the construction sector are now described as permanent. Once you have achieved jobs in the construction sector you have achieved full employment. That is the new Barbadian paradigm.

Let us not think about that because jobs for women are not going to be as transient, not the kind of women we have trained up to secondary school level who want to get an opportunity to use the skills they have, and many of them are more skilled than the men to provide for their families and to be actively involved. They are not the ones who are going to come out to football. Some of them may, but the majority of them do not.

A lot of them sit at their dining table at home and look down the tunnel of darkness. They invariably may have children at a young age. The father of the children very often may be itinerant and may not be actively involved in raising those children and they themselves get so demoralised by having skills and abilities but having to remain doing nothing for long periods of time that that in itself will contribute to ill health and to destruction of the family. That is one of the issues, I think, the Minister of Social Transformation needs to bring to the attention of the Ministers in the so-called productive sectors whose job it is to create new jobs and new enterprises for women.

I think focusing on rewarding small businesses established by women, particularly those who are presently unemployed and businesses that support their families, is something that we need to focus on.

7:05 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

The second point is the lack of opportunities to acquire education and skills. Earlier in the presentation to the House, the Minister responsible for training talked about the training programmes which had provided so many jobs for men essentially in the construction sector. What he was not able to say was that the Government had designed the kind of training programmes that would have provided sustainable jobs for women. That has to be of major concern. His focus was almost exclusively on the large number of men. Young men had been trained and had become supervisors or managers at Chefette or wherever else but at no point did he focus on the area that should be of great concern to us since if we accept that Barbados is still very much a matri-focal society in which the women are heads of households and when women are unemployed it has tremendous spinoff effects on a larger number of people than if a single man is unemployed. I think that is another element that the Minister needs to put

into the pot and going along with the suggestion that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy made. He needs to have the influence across Ministries to require his colleagues to focus on this major concern. If not, we will continue to lose a significant portion of our young generation of women to apathy and indifference and there are the one who when you go out to home canvassing and so on tend to be more cynical about politicians and their ability to deliver on their pledges. The third concern should be childhood deprivation which I spoke to the Minister about already and the problems of low income, poor health, poor housing and unsafe environment. I think that the threat to a large number of Barbadians children, the children of the working poor in this country as well as those who are unemployed being raised in those conditions do need attention. Even though they are employed, very often they are not paying the kind of attention to their children and to raising their family that they should. Parenting is a very difficult job contrary to what people may think that becoming a parent is the easiest thing to do. You need no qualifications, you need no special endowments,...

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Well, one or two but I said no special ones. The point is that it is the most difficult job because at the end of the day, your impact as a parent in a society can be tremendous. It can be a force for good and it can make a different. If it is badly done you can create grave problems even in an entire community. I think it is important for the Minister to focus on that element of childhood deprivation and families that are disrupted because of the inability of the parents to focus on their duties either because of unemployment or because of the fact that they are unable to be home to offer the kind of guidance and so on that is necessary. Think of the average child growing up in Barbados. One Saturday morning I had to go and collect some pudding and souse at a house. The grandmother is in the kitchen making the pudding and souse, four grand children are in the living room with Multi Choice television on and the remote in their hands. They are flicking channels and they settle on what otherwise would be a movie rated R - violence, nudity and bad language. She is in the kitchen on the phone talking to her customers, doing her business and these children are internalising all of that. It is that that the Attorney General now has to impress upon the Ministry of Social Transformation, in his role of Minister of Information, that contributes so much to the problems of violence in our society today. The fact that children are no longer innocent, no longer dreaming and that we are in fact shattering their world by exposing them to a lot of nastiness and violence on television day after day. In many homes where parents are trying to do other things and do not have the time to supervise their children or are indifferent as long as the television keeps their children preoccupied, then you have problems. I made one vow as a parent. There is only one television in our house and it is in our bedroom. Therefore, if our children want to watch TV we have to be in there and we have to see what they are watching because television is the most potent and dangerous force for evil and the promotion of violence in my view in terms of this generation. I really believe that.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

It is not a law enforcement matter at all. It is something that the society has to agree on. It is something that you have to keep constantly reminding people about. It is beyond that because once you get beyond television then there is the Internet and then there are other kinds of predators...

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

That is the point, when all this garbage goes into the minds of our children, what do you expect to produce twenty years from now? How are you going to stop? If your children are exposed to all of this negativity then we are going to reap more negative social consequences down the road than the kind of problems that we are facing now. I think the Minister should issue that clarion call and also find ways and means of encouraging others in a very positive and active parenting programme in Barbados, focusing on some of the simple things that parents and families need to do to protect their children and to develop healthy lifestyles. Those are some of the critical issues. As I have said, we have heard a lot in the debate this morning. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West talked about the middle class and was very critical of them. I agreed with some of the thing he said but I do not think any politician in his time, or mine, as I have said already, ever gave the middle class any world view. Nobody told them what their responsibility should be. We were walking around thumping our chest at the creation of the middle class but nobody ever had the courage to stand up somewhere and say it. Now when you start to tell them, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West gets vex and say that your message is directed at them and not at the people at the bottom. The point is that the people in the Farm have a community already. They do not need to built their community. They need to build some social relationships and get some other things done but when you go into the heights and terraces we are now trying to impose communities in there and the only thing that is propelling that is fear of crime and violence. The neighbourhood watches are what are developing in Barbados in the middle class areas instead of people saying let us form a community association propelled by altruistic views of what a community should be about. Some times we focus on the wrong communities because the absence of community in Barbados is not at that level so there is no point us speaking to that level right now. There are some problems there that create violence, there are some economic inequalities that is propelling the drug trade and so on and that is what is causing the violence. We understand that but where is it that you can find the absence of true community in this country? The point is that people say that members of the middle class should go back into the community. Not only them, we have hundreds of returning nationals from the United Kingdom in particularly who have worked in the Borough Councils doing social work among disadvantaged youth, among the disabled, in poor housing estates in London in the 60s in the times of the great depression and in the 70s when England was going through its most difficult economic crises and they have come back to Barbados with all of those skills and talents and yet, not enough is being done.

I have to lay that at the feet of the Honourable Member for the City because she did promised when they introduced the Returning Nationals programme that more would be done to employ the skills of these returning nationals. Whenever I speak to them I tell them when you come back to Barbados I urge you go back to the community from which you came because you will never enjoy the community in which you are now settling as long as you do not go back and try to help solve some of the problems in the community from which you came.

That is the point. I can think of hundreds of returning nationals living in St. Philip.

7:15 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I can think of hundreds of returning nationals living in St. Philip, St. Michael, all over Barbados who have skills in social work, who spend all day long sitting down at home doing nothing: driving into town, maybe socialising among each other, but they are not using those skills and if they love Barbados what we need to do is to say, "we don't only want your money, but when you are retired, we want you to come back to Barbados and help employ those special skills that you have acquired outside of Barbados as well" and I think that is very important. But I agree with the call...

Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, Sir, on a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is very fast to place blame at somebody's feet. You cannot tell a returning national what to do. I do not know what happens where he lives, but our records in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs show us that the returning nationals have brought a new vitality to almost every service organisation in this Barbados. They also show us too many Barbadians are still unwelcoming of these return nationals and particularly the ones from the United Kingdom and he well knows that because he was one.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Well put. I do not know. The Honourable Member for the City always has a good retort to anything.

The point is if they are not being received into the system that is something else that has to be worked on and they argued that they have come back here and asked how they can contribute and nobody can tell them and nobody is telling them. Just as nobody is telling the people in the middle class to abandon their cocktail parties.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

This is the first time I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West saying that but I regret it was not fifteen years ago they said that when I was coming in here in the days of the great combination. Start spending some money. Assist me in St. John with the football team. For the first in the history of Barbados, the Honourable Member St. Michael South East will know, I have a team in the first division, St. John Sonnet, I cannot even get all of those great civil servants from St. John - there are

others born in St. John who would know of them so well, to come and pay attention and do some work with those young people.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

But, that does not matter. It is a social problem. It has nothing to do with politics. Just as you cannot get people, despite what you are going to say, who were born in the City, to come back and do the kinds of things you want them to do in the City. There may be a few token individuals who, because of their achievements, you can bring back. Maybe people like Little Rick, the Mighty Gabby and others, yes. But I am talking about the people who are going to be able to consistently apply themselves to working with our football teams, our cricket teams, children need assistance in reading, that is a big problem in Barbados, twice a week engaging in those kinds of exercises. There are large numbers of young Barbadian children who could do with that kind of assistance a Saturday morning exercise, a two-days a week exercise, helping them to enjoy music. There are a whole variety of programmes that can be done and we are always short of the resources to undertake these programmes, because a lot of people simply do not get it. They tell you, "Oh yes. I want to help." You design the programmes and then you find that something else takes away their time and you are left having to find the resources yourself, to pay somebody who is already butting about all over Barbados doing the same thing. So it is the same people, doing the same thing everywhere in Barbados.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I would like to inform the Honourable Member that he can return to speak another time.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Sir. I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. John for his contribution. Some of the initiatives which he talked about are initiatives that are welcome in Barbados, Sir.

I also want to address and continue, as I said I will be very meticulous and careful in presenting the case of the Ministry of Social Transformation, I still dealing with the policy, because everyone wants to know what is the policy. Shortly, we will be laying in Parliament, a Green Paper on disability and it is against that background that I want to commend and thank also the Representative for St. Philip North for his contribution to this document which will be shortly laid in Parliament.

Sir, I want also to compliment the Minister of Public Works, when I had a meeting with him for having made available to the disabled community, the Transport Board is bringing in two specially adaptable and equipped buses for the disabled community in Barbados.

Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation is committed to the development of a policy to protect all persons with disabilities in Barbados. During the debate, I will not say much on this because I am hoping that a televised debate, so that those persons in the disabled community could get a chance to hear what is the Government's policy for the disabled community. I would also like to urge the Leader

of the House that at that point when we are having that debate that he brings in person to do sign language so that those persons will be able to follow the debate. Certainly, we are definitely in need of those capturing machines for television so that those persons at home could also follow the debate on television.

Sir, we are also developing in the Ministry of Social Transformation a national policy on gender. Very shortly you should see the establishment of the Bureau of Gender Affairs and I will speak on the whole issue of gender later in this debate, Sir, but I want to set it against a background of the whole rationalisation process of the Ministry of Social Transformation and this rationalisation document is before the Ministry of Finance. The reason why it is still there is because the whole document has in it implications for staffing, so it will take a little time and I am hoping that the rationalisation document for the Ministry of Social Transformation should be forthcoming shortly so that we can get ahead smoothly in the business of social transformation.

Also, Sir, a National Development and Coordination Unit will be established to make sure that there is a smooth, rational, coordinated and effective process under the Ministry whereby, as alluded to by many Members before me, avoiding the duplication of services across the Ministry.

This Unit will provide research and development support and establish a networking division to facilitate effective coordination within and across Ministries. I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy will be happy to hear this, and also the social partners.

7:25 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

We will be establishing a promotion committee. There is already a promotion committee at the National Assistance Board but this is a broader committee which will be responsible for the restoration of all activities that seek to include the elderly and the disabled into the mainstream of social activities as well as act as a fundraising agent for the various departments and functions under the Ministry of Social Transformation. This committee will also seek to advance its mandate through the inclusion of partnerships with CBO's and non-governmental organisation (NGO's).

Sir, let me pause at this moment to say that the Honourable Member for the City must be complimented as Barbados' main advocate for the non-governmental organisation (NGOs) sector not only in Barbados but across the Caribbean and also the Americas. In the few conferences that I have attended of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) nature, the name of the Honourable Member for the City has been mentioned in those places. I want to compliment her for her work with the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) sector in Barbados.

Sir, right now, the Ministry is forging ahead with a policy called Millennium One which would see formal arrangement between the Ministry and also the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and CBOs community in Barbados. This promotional committee will be strategically placed under the coordination unit that I spoke to before.

Sir, I now want to get to a department that has been widely discussed in this Chamber. That is the Community Development Department. I will take my time on this because \$3 million has been allocated to this Ministry. That is just an approximation.

The Honourable Member for St. John made a vital point in terms of the rationalisation of the Ministry. In the rationalisation process, the Community Development Department will be renamed as the Social Development Bureau. We are not renaming for renaming sake because we are hoping to see - as the Right Honourable Prime Minister alluded to this morning in his presentation - a merger of the Poverty Bureau and the Community Development Department which will be named the Social Development Bureau.

This department will seek to promote the development and empowerment of community-based and non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and will serve as a catalyst for national development. Focus will be given to poverty eradication and - note that I have agreed with the Honourable Member for the City - eradication activities to alleviate and eradicate poverty, building on community development and the empowerment of community organisations thereby ensuring their access to resources.

Sir, in keeping with the process of rationalisation and to give greater focus to social policy formulation and poverty eradication, the Ministry will be initiating a process to amalgamate these two departments together. This process will also ensure that the characteristics of social policy, development and poverty will be addressed at the community level.

The quality of service delivered by the Community Development Department is currently engaging the attention of almost everyone as a result of the steady decline in community life and the erosion of the communities centres as a focal point for community building.

Sir, again, the Honourable Member for St. John talked about crime and we could look at that. Gun related crimes and violence is perpetuated by the youths in Barbados almost on a daily basis. This endemic violence suggests that Barbados' tradition as a caring society has now been replaced by a block culture. I will get to the block culture and the reference to the boys on the block later on.

Sir, in this regard the department is faced with a number of strategic challenges which will give a significant impact on its operations and performance. These strategic challenges must be considered in view of the changing conditions and increase in customer demand. The new Social Development

Bureau will be driven by the Government of Barbados initiatives to focus primarily on poverty.

Specific attention will be given to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) Report on poverty in Barbados, the world summit for social development which was held in Copenhagen in 1995 and the follow-up directional plan of action which was held in Trinidad and Tobago in 1996.

Sir, research has shown - I want to set the background very fair - that there continues to be serious gaps of information which relates to issues of social policies.

Sir, the Community Development Department will take the lead to develop the social frameworks that are necessary to effect the new thrust of the Ministry of Social Transformation to decentralise its services. It is also envisaged that this new approach will set in place a number of mechanisms to allow for the implementation of a plan of action for the alleviation and the eventual eradication of poverty.

It will also set the framework for an integrated community building programme which includes the building of social capital, social investment and rationalisation of services. Within this context, activities will be implemented under the two new approaches:

Social development programmes which will seek to strengthen the process through a sustained and focused capacity community building programme.

Sir, this is important to ensure that effective intermediary organisations are in place to develop, manage and implement effective programmes to specific groups. The building of capacity will be important to allow organisations at the community level to fully participate in this tripartite approach which will include Government, the private sector and the community.

Sir, social development programmes will also allow for greater participation of persons in activities at the community level. That is the broad focus.

Now, let us get into the social development programmes because all of this talk is just the backdrop of setting the playing field for what is to happen. Social development programmes - the one I want briefly to touch on is the community empowerment programme which will be geared towards the strengthening of community-based and non-governmental organisations (NGO's) to allow them to create a more fundamental developmental role in their respective areas of focus.

In addition, a specific range of training will be designed to improve the skills and capacity building of the leaders and members of these various organisations islandwide.

In this vastly changing technological world, we have to equip our community leaders with the skills that are necessary to carry communities forward and not the old methods where you just hold a little sponsor walk and sometimes a little raffle to raise funds. Communities have now gone past that process.

I like to refer now, as we are in the new millennium, to the term of a community leader not as a community leader but rather as a community practitioner because we have a thing in this country that only a certain level of persons should be afforded these types of terminologies. Those persons who

would have worked in the communities for prolonged period of time and would have gone beyond the call of duty, should be afforded the courtesy of a terminology that they can be called community practitioners.

7:35 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

Continuation of Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

Also, Sir, there is absolutely no reason why those persons who have worked at the community level for such a long time cannot be afforded an honorary doctorate just like the Mighty Sparrow who came to Barbados during CARIFESTA that was held here. He went to the University and was afforded this courtesy. Those persons in the communities who have made sacrifices over a period of time, this should also be done.

Sir, Community Halls of Fame - this is nothing new. What surprises me in Barbados is that when we are going to tackle the whole issue of crime, we have to put support mechanism and systems in place to deal with it. This Community Hall of Fame will highlight community members whether deceased or are alive. We have a bad situation in Barbados that we only honour people when they die and when they die we hear the most grandiose things about them. We have to change that. We are saying in the Community Hall of Fame we will honour these people for their contribution to the development of the communities.

On the way right now at the Community Development Department there is a committee set up to establish a Hall of Fame For Women because once when you establish the Bureau of Gender Affairs, it will not put the issue of women's matters on the back burner. Rather, the Bureau of Gender Affairs will try to bring equity to the whole issue of gender. We have a committee in the Ministry working on establishing a Hall of Fame For Women in Barbados.

Also, sir, community buildings, should be named after persons from within the community. Let us say my own community, Sir. For instance, you have the Parkinson Community Centre, the Parkinson Secondary School and yet the Parkinson Community Centre was built by a gentleman who was able to motivate all the youngsters in the community called Granville Foster. Now, why does John Parkinson have the privilege of having his name on the Parkinson School, the Parkinson Housing area all named after him and also the Parkinson Community Centre? It is unfortunate that Mr. Foster is dead but that Centre will be renamed the Granville Foster Resource Centre. I will touch a lot on resource centres so that Barbadians could grasp the concept of what a resource centre is really about and not just a building with just a computer lab.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member has one minute. You can touch on those things next week. You can come on Monday and touch on those things so wind up.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

In winding up, Sir, just let me touch on the Community Hall of Fame. Sir, if you look into the new communities, in the communities themselves, we have to build the esteem and pride of our young people. What we are saying is that those persons who are alive in the communities, we want to honour them. We want to create those special places for them.

Against that background, I have spoken to the Attorney General about having a new community initiative on television called "Community Faces" where those leaders within the respective communities, what they are doing in the communities, will be highlighted on television so that those persons within the respective communities would be able to not only identify with their community leaders but would be able to identify with what is happening within their respective communities.

Sir, before I complete my speech, I just want to let this Honourable Chamber know that right now, as I speak, the preparatory meeting for the 5th Ministerial Conference which will be held in Jamaica, is being held at Sam Lord's Castle. For the first time at these meetings the Ministry of Social Transformation is organising its end. The United States, Canada and almost the entire region are being represented at Sam Lord's Castle for this preparatory meeting.

Sir, I am hoping and looking forward to that because I have now begun. After this debate it should not be said again in Barbados that this Ministry does not have a policy, a philosophy, a programme. They are the three Ps that built up the Pinelands Community, P for Pine, P for Perry and P for Princess so I just want to transfer them to see what I am talking about.

Again, Sir, I will sit down now but the time will come when I will get up again. Thank you.

Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, it is a wonderful thing to be able to live to see the community centres of the 1950s now being transformed, and I use that word deliberately, into the resource centres of the early 21st century. That is no more than I wish to say at this point. I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East will wish now to complete. He was in good stride.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

Thank you very much. Sir, I was speaking about community centres and the whole concept of community faces. If we are really going to effectively tackle crime in Barbados, we have to go into the communities, not only going on the block on a temporary basis, but at least what we have to do is to concentrate on certain persons to ensure that we help our youth, that we become our brothers' keepers.

I have grown up in a community, Sir, that was once considered to be the worst community in Barbados. It was one time termed as a basterised community. Could anything good come out of Nazareth? We have taken that community through sacrifice, dedication, hard work, blood, sweat and tears, criticisms and mobilised that community, using the power of determination, interacting and mixing with those persons to bring about what we would call a wholesome community. Obviously now, Sir, you will find that a lot of recent reports that gun related incidents probably happened there but that is not attributed to what the organisations are doing.

Sir, the Community Development Division will be initiating the Prime Minister's Best Village Community Competition. Sir, let me say first of all that it has nothing to do with Owen Seymour

Arthur. It is the Prime Minister's Best Village Community Competition so whoever the Prime Minister is, it will remain that name. It is not new because the concept is also in Trinidad called the Prime Minister's Best Village Competition.

This Prime Minister's Best Community Competition will replace the current inter-centre games. Also, it will replace just the simple community choir. It will not obliterate or destroy them. What you will see is that the inter-centre games will be adding two more disciplines to these inter-centre games.

One of the two disciplines is athletics. I cannot believe that in Barbados over the years that we have not ever had an inter-community athletic meeting where communities compete against one another. We have the international games and we have the school games but never the communities competing against one another in athletics. There is no more wholesome activity in terms of communities interacting with each other than the sport of athletics so the community inter-centre games would be expanded onto the Prime Minister's Best Village Community Competition to include that area.

Also, Sir, we have to be in tune with what is happening in this country. We have to look for new innovative techniques or concepts if we are going to successfully tackle the problem of crime. We have to give the youth what they want. We have to get them involved in other social activity.

7:45 p.m.

Tuesday, March 21, 2000

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, why I say that is because if you watch the youth carefully, today in Barbados we have so many football competitions, you have the BICO tournament, you have the BSA tournament, you have all kinds of community tournaments operating in Barbados but what we have not yet tapped in on is the fact that if you watch the youth carefully you will see that there is a new revolution in sports that they are creating. Hence, the new concept of what you call sports ball soccer. In other words, you build a small set of bars and put them on the hard court which are lighted and you find that there is scrimmage on the hard court. There is a commercial made in Barbados, I do not know if it is called the Scope company here in Barbados, that uses a simple method of it and it is attracting all the young people.

We are adding sports soccer to the Prime Minister's Best Community Competition and you will see a lot more youngsters engaging in something that they like. We are using sports as a gateway for social development.

In addition, the programme is going to develop and strengthen inter-community links and social

relations through the medium of the performing, visual and culinary arts.

Sir, in addition we will be using environmental information because when we look into the community at this point in time, you will find that in many communities there is lot of garbage and people are not fully aware about their environment. We are trying to include the environment as part of the Prime Minister's Best Community Competition. It will seek, Sir, to challenge community members to utilise natural human resources in creative ways. Why can we not have the best resource competition? Why can we not have environmental competitions throughout the community.

Sir, most communities, in my view, are kept so dirty that it is appalling. If we cannot correct this problem through morale persuasion or other activity, Sir, we might very well have to look at aspects of what I call creating environmental policemen in Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

It has happened in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Orient and we might very well have to look at it. The recent greening competition by the Nation newspaper which, to all reports was very successful show, that there is a need for a programme like this in communities because that programme actually was on the periphery of the communities and you can imagine what would have happened if they had gone into the communities. We will continue with the assistance to groups and organisations which will see us assisting them with their community projects, their overseas tours etcetera as exchanges, marketing promotion, developing linkages and all sorts of networking.

Sir, there has been a lot of talk about the youths on the blocks. Sir, we are working on a programme call Youth On The Block Programme. I do not like the name Youth On The Block Programme because I came up on the block and most of us here came up as youth on the block. What happened, Sir, is that activity in a bad form possibility emanated from the youth on the block but this Youth On The Block programme will be a follow-up to a previous consultation which was held last year when seventy youths from various communities were brought together. This programme will aim to provide these youths with positive alternatives to challenge their energies and skills. Emphasis will be placed on productive activities, gainful employment in association with the Vocational Training Board.

Let me once pause again to say, Sir, that what is not shown in the Estimates is that this year, for the first time, the Ministry of Social Transformation will give a direct lead into other Ministries in term of getting its programmes pushed forward. One of these agencies will be the Vocational Training Board particularly with the Youth On The Block Programme. The cross collaboration and the consultative process with other Ministries across Barbados is very, very important.

Sir, I also want to talk about the community tourism programme which will be done under the Community Development Division. This community tourism programme is being developed as a joint project with the Ministry of Tourism. It is aimed at providing new tourist attractions for Barbados showing the indigenous culture and life of Barbadians and providing economic opportunities for local communities. It will be a Swholesome type of tourism that will provide benefits to both visitors and locals alike.

Sir, pilot projects are currently on the way at Bathseba. Only last week I went to Bathseba and was looking at proposed community sites at Bathseba, St. Joseph. There are also being located in St. John where we are doing the nature hikes etcetera. The Bawdens Project in St. Andrew is a perfect model of community tourism, utilising the concept of eco-tourism and sustainable energy. It is against that background that I want to compliment the Pinelands Creative Workshop for helping the Bawdens group by giving them a grant of some \$5000 to help them in the process. Also, Sir, the Bawdens Project in St. Andrew is one of those projects that the Ministry will be seriously looking at to fund because, Sir, it is the informal process. There is a hypocritical thing that happens in Barbados that every time that we seek to empower the community organisations Sir, people in this country, who should know better talk about you are giving away vital Government funds to organisations. I do not see it as a give-away, Sir, I see it more as an important process where we are empowering community organisations and also to vest it into the human capital of this country.

Sir, these community development projects ... it will be remiss of me if I did not say that one will also be started in St. Michael South East because in Barbados, we have this thing that when tourists arrive at the airport and seaport we put them in a physical reservation. They either go to the south coast or they go to the west coast. When they leave the cruise ship they go and visit Harrisons Cave or they probably will get down to the Animal Flower Cave but none of this foreign currency must ever come into the community.

I am sure with the new initiative and thrust by the Ministry of Social Transformation with community tourism initiatives that some of those healthy dollars, particularly now that the United States currency and the British currency is so strong, will be payable to the communities but the community must be able to develop their capacity to organise and develop programme that will make them attractive to the tourists. The Pinelands Creative Workshop itself performs on the hotel circuit every Thursday night ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I will now ask the Honourable Member to finish off his speech. It is now eight o'clock and we have had a long day and we have Monday to continue our debate so I will ask the Honourable Member to finish immediately.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

PROGRESS

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour the SPEAKER and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

7:55 p.m.

Friday, March 17, 2000

SUSPENSION

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Honourable House be suspended until Monday, 20th March 2000 at 1000 a.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House be suspended until Monday 20th March 2000 at 10:00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

8:00 p.m.