
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, April 24, 2001

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, April 24, 2001.

PRESENT

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE, K.A., Q.C., M.A., LL.M.
(Cantab.)

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

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

Hon. Sir. HAROLD St. JOHN, K.A., Q.C., LL.B.

Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon)

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A. (Hons.) Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.) L.E.C. (Minister of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources)

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform)

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY (Minister of Social Transformation)

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture)

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Mr. D. T. GILL, B.Sc.

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

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

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Wednesday, March 28, 2001.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Wednesday, March 28, 2001, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statements for the months of October and November 2000 as prepared by the Accountant General.

I would also like to give a special welcome to some of the senior citizens of Barbados.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was recently given a letter from His Excellency the Governor-General who is on leave. However, I have a letter here from the Acting Governor-General and I read:

19th April, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker:

His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Clifford Husbands, GCMG, KA, is unable to resume his duties and has been granted further leave of absence from office during the period 19th to 29th April, 2001.

In accordance with the provisions of section 29 (1) (b) of the Constitution, I am required to continue to perform the functions of the Office of Governor-General during His Excellency's absence.

As the Honourable the House of Assembly will not be in session, it will not be possible for the usual Message to be sent to the Chamber. Will you, therefore, please bring His Excellency's absence formally to the attention of The Honourable the House of Assembly when next it meets.

I have the honour to be,
Yours faithfully,

ACTING GOVERNOR-GENERAL
Sir Denys Williams

PAPERS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Value Added Tax Order, 2001.
2. Customs Tariff (Amendment) Order, 2001.
3. Financial Administration (Public Enterprise Investment Fund) Order, 2001.
4. The Public Officers Loan and Travelling Allowances Regulations, 2001.

I am also commanded to lay the following:

Annual Report of the Barbados Fire Service for the year 1999.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the year 1997.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill, known as the Gold Award of Achievement Bill, 2001, be read a first time.

I give notice that the Government desires to complete this Bill in all its stages today.

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

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

REPLIES TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, I give notice that the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 23 asked by the Honourable Member for St. John is ready.

Similarly, in respect of the Minister of Tourism and International Transport, I give notice that the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 36 asked by the Honourable Member for St. John is also ready.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Government Business is now the order of the day. Order No. 9.

ORDER NO. 9 – THE GOLD AWARD OF
ACHIEVEMENT BILL, 2001

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in this Honourable Chamber today to move the second reading of the Gold Award of Achievement Bill.

Sir, this Government has brought this Bill before the Honourable Chamber to make provision for the conferment of a single award on an annual basis to a person who, in the preceding year, would have through diligence, sacrifice, dedication to service and commitment to excellence, made an outstanding contribution to either community life in Barbados or to the improvement of the economic and social conditions of Barbados.

This award, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is being proposed in the context of this legislation because we believe that, given the environment which we have created in the context of the establishment of national heroes, a society needs to be able to reward its citizens and to acknowledge outstanding achievements or commitment to excellence or sacrifice in the context of challenging circumstances on an ongoing basis.

Indeed, Sir, we all know that there exists another range of awards which is normally conferred by the Governor-General on the celebration of Independence but this Government felt very strongly that there needed also, in the celebration of the Heroes' Day, to be a separate award which speaks in many ways to the attributes exhibited by the ten National Heroes of Barbados in some form or another.

While we accept that their attributes as National Heroes are all-encompassing, we do believe that citizens on occasion show elements of them, and that rather than wait until people have passed to the great beyond, we should be in a position to salute and to highlight to the rest of the society, what we believe to be conduct worthy of commendation.

Sir, this is particularly difficult in a society such as ours which has been subject to changing mores and values, particularly in the last 20 to 25 years, as a result of the increase in access to information, largely by reason of technological developments. And that information will flow, whether on television, film, video, the Internet, through access to books and magazines, or even, Sir, the increasing presence of persons who do not live in this society but who visit on an annual or any basis and who constitute numbers, I believe, in excess of one million per year now, in respect of the tourism industry.
11.30 a.m.

It is inevitable when you have that large number of persons coming in and out of a small society such as ours that there must be some impact on the values and morals of the society. In those circumstances, Sir, it becomes even more important for a young society such as ours, a country that will be celebrating its 35th anniversary of Independence this year, a country that has really only known democratic rule for 50 years, with the right to universal adult suffrage having been gained exactly 50 years ago this year, and a country which recognises that it has the responsibility to define what it honours, what it deems as worthy and what it

deems as repugnant, and in so doing to help mould the values and perspectives of its citizens.

We believe, Sir, that that task is more challenging today than it perhaps has ever been in the history of the governance of this country. In those circumstances, it behoves Government to use a range of measures to seek to reinforce in the psyche of its citizenry those things which are worthy and those things which are repugnant, and that we do so not on the basis of presenting a dictate from Government, but by building consensus among the people of this country and recognising the values which we want to emulate and hold up and those which we want to eschew.

It is, therefore, significant that this Bill in Clause 5 speaks of the attributes of diligence, sacrifice, dedication to service and commitment to excellence. All four of those attributes, we believe, are those which would have been found in the best of what constituted the Barbadian spirit during the course of the last 400-odd years. We believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that those attributes have come under threat largely because the global thought process and perspective, particularly in the western hemisphere, have moved from the principles of building communities to libertarianism, upholding the virtues of the individual and upholding the virtues of the individual's desiring and obtaining what he or she wants for himself or herself, even at the expense of what is best for the community, the family or the country.

So that we face a society, like many other western societies, that has allowed the individual and individual rights to become so dominant that very often we fail to realise that humanity operates best when people accept checks on their rights and freedoms in the interest of the community, as opposed to simply being given a licence to do as they please, when they please and how they please. I believe, in those circumstances, that the challenges which a young society such as ours faces become even more acute because we have to engage in national dialogue and we have to speak to the people of this country in as frank a manner as possible.

The role of governance in many of the societies in the western hemisphere has changed considerably. The change has come with the rise of democracy and the increase of people's individual rights, and has come at a time when the rise in the individual rights of people has also led to individual behaviour being a threat to human security more than it has ever been in the history of human society.

What do I mean by that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We have a situation where, to a very large extent, the challenges that we face in the governance of this society are made worse by reason of the individual behavioural choices of many of our

citizens, and we are forced to provide for them irrespective of their comments that lead to risk and damage to the rest of the society and persons within the society.

Whether it is through behaviour that makes them vulnerable to diseases such as AIDS or to addictions such as drugs and alcohol, or behaviour that may lead to crime and violence, all of these things trigger an expenditure pattern on the part of Government. But perhaps even worse than the expenditure pattern that it triggers on the part of Government is the damage which is done to that individual, and by extension to that individual's family and community. We have, therefore, to look and see to what extent we need to speak to our citizens and get them to understand that their individual behaviour has a greater impact on the role of Government than it has ever had.

One of the things that happen when you give people access to greater rights is that they must take greater responsibility in recognising that their individual behaviour patterns can negatively impact on other people in the society, and on the society and the economy as a whole. It is not only in terms of human security that it becomes an issue when we look at the values of the individual in this society, it is also with respect to how we will succeed and strive in our economy and by extension in our society.

There is no doubt that we are participating in a global economy whose precepts have changed and the sense of responsibility felt by developed countries to assist countries such as ours that are recently independent is no longer there. Those countries that dominated by reason of colonial governance have a different generation of leadership and now have people who do not feel the sense of responsibility to assist countries which they would have wrongly and wickedly exploited, over the course of centuries in many instances.

We are being told that we must go on our own, that we must be competitive and that we must be capable of fighting against all odds. The only way in which we can provide for the society, continue to provide free education, continue to give the quality of health care that we give – even when there are complaints, we still have a quality of health care that is superior to most other developing countries – and the only way we can continue to provide subsidized public transportation or the quality and range of benefits that we give under our social security scheme is by being able to continue to maintain the standard of revenue and the quality of foreign exchange earnings that we raise through the efforts of those charged with doing that within the context of our economy.

Many of those people are coming under increasing pressure because their competition now is no longer that which exists within the domestic economy alone but, in fact,

may be from areas as far-flung as the Pacific region or within the context of the developed world. Many of them have to be creative, as well as exhibit greater attributes of hard work and commitment in order to make their businesses survive. 11.40 a.m.

It also requires a change in attitude in many of our citizens who previously have been comfortable with trading, buying and selling alone, without seeking to create goods and services that are unique so as to build the wealth of this country. In those circumstances, Sir, the values of those persons in the private sector have to be reviewed and those values must feed the development of a strong entrepreneurial spirit that understands how to manage risks and that it is the management of risks that will create the greatest benefits for themselves, this economy and this society.

We have to thank the comfort that three centuries of protectionism have given to our private sector, particularly our traditional private sector, and we have to fight it in a manner that speaks to them in terms of our not wanting an adversarial relationship with them, but wanting to work with them as they change their focus, as they change their emphases and their habits in terms of determining what can be appropriate business, using Barbados only as a domicile but not using the territorial boundaries of Barbados to limit the areas of business in which they will operate or in which they will invest. That requires a change of values. I am not suggesting it is easy and, in fact, I believe, Sir, that it will take more than a generation to realise that kind of change. In addition to taking a generation, it may also take a fusion of non-traditional persons who have not been weighed down by that legacy of buying and selling in protected conditions to participate in the private sector so as to ensure that there is new blood, new thought, and a new courage if we are to meet the challenges of continuing to provide for our citizenry as we have done.

It is a remarkable thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, in 50 years of having the right to vote, this country has provided for its citizenry a range of rights and a quality of life that is second to none in any developing country across the world and, indeed, comparable to that enjoyed by most developed countries. We have done that without bloodshed to any large degree, without the kind of social and economic dislocation that we have seen in many other countries and that we continue to see.

Let us not forget that a decade has not even passed since the right to vote was given to the 20 million citizens of South Africa. This country has been able to hold up its head and to boast that for the last 50 years – the anniversary being December 18th, 1951 – Barbadians of all backgrounds who were adults over the age of 21 were allowed to vote in this

country and to begin the process of determining for themselves what kind of landscape, what kind of mirror image, what kind of business, what kind of family, what kind of community they would have created for themselves, rather than be the subject and victims of dictates by a sole oligarchy who may not have had their interests at heart.

I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to determine those attributes which are timeless and which have in a very large way helped to shape this society to bring out the best in us, to give us an opportunity. What we have done is amazing, Sir. We fought along with others to remove the most iniquitous and degrading circumstances known to human history: without access to representation in Parliament because we were not allowed to sit in Parliament; without access to the law courts because in many instances we were not even considered persons in the arena of the law courts; without access to capital because the majority of citizens who were deprived of their liberty did not have access to wealth to help them buy their way out and even the few that had access to some level of money depended still on the will of the person who owned their freedom.

We achieved a transformation in this society without any of those benefits but relying on two things primarily: resourcefulness through hard work, and creativity and faith in God. We have as a country, today on the dawn of the 21st century, to determine those attributes which are timeless and I believe, Sir, in so determining them, to hold them up to the rest of this society for emulation and for commendation.

It is in this context Sir, that Clause 5 of this Bill was drafted. We believe that those achievements should not be limited to those who have participated in the high altitude of economic and social life of this country, but should also be available to those whose efforts were extraordinary within the building of community life in this country and that it must be something to which every Barbadian, through behaving in a way that reflects these attributes, can build up and feel that they have an opportunity to be nominated for and to be awarded the Gold Award of Achievement.

I believe, Sir, that this Bill is appropriate not only because it is in the context of the week in which we celebrate the elevation to the status of heroes of ten proud Barbadians, but it is appropriate in the context of the economic and social life of this country and the juncture that we have reached because I say to you, Sir, that those things which can undermine the achievements of the last fifty years are present within our society, but we have to rise above them because those challenges are in no way as great as the deprivation of liberty and the iniquitous circumstances that our forefathers had to suffer when they were alive. They are not above our being able to overcome them.

I verily believe that part and parcel of seeking to overcome them requires a change in the role and function of governance and governments. I believe that we have a duty to engage in far more dialogue and to come to a common consensus with all Barbadians, irrespective of race, age, class, religion, and in so coming to that consensus determine, for the benefit of those who have the privilege of even calling themselves Barbadians or of living in this country, that these are the things which we as a society and as a Government are prepared to honour and these are the things which we believe that the individual actions of citizens should seek to remove from either themselves or their immediate environment if they are found within their family or their community.

We are small enough to be able to do it effectively and within a generation. It will not happen overnight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the changes did not come overnight. The indiscipline that we speak of did not happen last year or the year before, but it has been a creeping cancer over the course of the last two generations, largely left untouched, but coming to the point where it becomes life-threatening in its ability to end our ability to rank among those developing nations of the world whose quality of life is among the best.

I believe, Sir, that it requires our going into the communities. I believe that we must meet with all the churches, all the denominations, and that we must seek to build common consensus. I believe, Sir, that every Ministry of Government must determine what are the cultural imperatives, in terms of the building of those values across each Ministry. In agriculture the production of local foods and the purchase by Barbadians of local foods recognising, as it were, in the purchase of Barbadian goods and manufacturing that for every dollar spent we have protected a job in this country and stopped creating another one in another country.

11.50 a.m.

Sir, I believe that campaigns that simply speak about "Buying Bajan" cannot be sufficient in the desire to change the habits and patterns of an entire nation. We have to be able to speak to individuals in small groups and explain to them the same information that we have access to, confident that their good sense and reason would allow them to come to similar conclusions particularly when we consider that, in the context of this country, we are seeing diminishing exports to countries like Trinidad but seeing increasing imports from Trinidad in the context of the local economy.

What does the individual citizen have to do with it? Every time you make a decision to buy a product that is not made here when one that is made here is available, irrespective that it might cost you ten or fifteen cents more, you are putting, on the charge of Government, a greater

liability in respect of those who are on welfare or who depend upon the social services of Government.

Sir, we must go into the tourism industry and have them determine what are the cultural imperatives and values within the context of this industry that need to be emulated, and how they can best be emulated by both the citizenry who occupy the workforce and the tourism sector, as well as those who manage and own the plant in that sector.

Sir, we must go within education, as we try to do, and ensure that the curriculum, which we are now reforming, reflects those values and speaks to those things that have the capacity to create the confidence in Barbadian people to enhance their creativity, to give them a commitment towards the performance of excellence in all that they do and in spite of whatever challenges they may face.

We must go, Sir, into the Ministry of Housing. Many people do not understand that the Ministry of Housing, more than most other Ministries, has impacted negatively on many of Barbados' cultural values over the course of the last two generations. While it is applaudable and acceptable that the Government started a public sector housing programme in the 1950s, much of that was done without reference to the cultural values of the people who were placed in these housing areas.

They went into these housing areas without access to recreational activity, without consideration of how they would interact as citizens that did not know one another, how they would replace the bonds that existed in the villages that they came from, who would speak to the children when the children did wrong in the same way that somebody in the village would have spoken to them, who would constitute the community entrepreneur in that housing development, recognising that at some time some family might have need to rely on some form of loan because things were just a little too tight to get through and if there were some form of community entrepreneur that they would have the opportunity to benefit from rather than to participate in illegal activity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Housing, how it plans and executes its housing developments, has a critical role to play in the preservation of those values that we believe to be necessary in the building of this society. There is no Ministry that can absent itself from self-reflection and from recognising that it has to determine what are the cultural imperatives in respect of those values that must be preserved in the building of this society.

Sir, as I have said before, it is not only the responsibility of the Government or the individual citizen but it is also the responsibility of those within the non-governmental organisations, sporting groups, community

groups and the church. The church in particular is still responsible for helping to enhance the spiritual life of the majority of Barbadians. These organisations have to determine how best, through the principles and precepts in the specific religion that they attach themselves to, as well as the way in which they live their lives, as well as the cultural realities of the environment within which they function, how people can best see to create that confident, creative, hard-working Barbadian who sees excellence as the only guiding light in anything that he does.

Sir, I therefore believe that this Bill is appropriate today in helping to signal to the rest of the society that these are some of the virtues that we must seek to emulate and to allow Barbadians to aspire to achieving this reward so that their lives, their daily activities and decisions will reflect these attributes.

Equally, we will have an opportunity to be able to move beyond the words of this Bill and to move into the communities, whether it is the political parties, the Government, the church or groups, to determine what they can do to improve on the quality of life that both the self, the community and the country now experience. Also, how is my personal behaviour negatively impacting on my capacity to survive or earn and how can I change that behaviour by changing the values which I hold dear to myself to guide me in everything that I do and say in life?

Sir, we had the honour last night, as part of this week of celebration for National Heroes, to launch a book called 'For Love of Country' that speaks admirably to the lives and times of the ten National Heroes of Barbados.

Sir, I believe that it is my duty to lay a copy of this book in the House. I also want to use this opportunity to thank those Barbadians who helped to make this book a reality, particularly Mr. Francis W. Blackman who coordinated it and Professor Hilary Beckles who edited the book.

Sir, I believe that the essays written are worthy of being read into the records of this House. Also worthy of mention are the contributions and efforts of Francis W. Blackman, Professor Hilary Beckles, Alana Johnson, Anthony DeV. Phillips, Kevyn Arthur, Sir Alexander Hoyos, Dr. Leonard Shorey, Robert Morris, Ronnie Hughes, Pedro L. V. Welch, Jnr, and Keith Sandiford; the ten portraits that have been done and which stand so gloriously in Heroes Square adorning that Square; the work of some young Barbadians whose creative talents have allowed us to produce a book which is not only serious in its content but pleasing to the eye and the efforts of my Ministry and the National Cultural Foundation. This is a book which should be in the household

of every Barbadian because it speaks not only to the best of who we are, but to the best of what we are.

Those attributes that I refer to in the context of this Bill are well founded in the lives and works of these National Heroes in the sacrifice, the commitment to excellence, the dedication to cause, the creativity and the confidence to move forward when all is against you. Every Barbadian in every household, if they own a copy of this book, will be forced to remember when the spirit is weak that these are the things that we should aspire to as individual citizens.

12.00 noon

This is the kind of life that we should seek to build for ourselves and for our families and we would only be enhancing the cause of Barbados in so doing.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we will have many opportunities in this Honourable Chamber to continue to discuss what Barbados is and what Barbados stands for. Sir, that must come from many parts, not just from us as individual Parliamentarians, but after the level of consultations and dialogues with the people of this country, because part and parcel of building a stronger democracy is empowering the people to feel that their views and perspectives have been worthy of reflection and consideration and, indeed, in helping to build the policies and programmes that would eventually improve their lives.

Sir, never again should a Government of this country make people feel that they are all things to all people and that there is either omnipotence or omniscience, but that the process of governance is one that requires that contribution and cooperation by all of the citizens of the country and by all of the institutions of the country.

Sir, the movement towards libertarianism out of the bosom of liberalism has seen to it, particularly in the context of democratic societies, that the rights of individuals for the last 40 years or so have become paramount in the consideration of people's decision-making. We have a responsibility to balance those rights with the clear responsibilities of citizens and institutions of Government and, in so doing, recognise that the only commitment that can bind us together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a commitment to the common good of the country and the community. If my desires are other than those and your desires are other than those, when we have the opportunity, then we have the prospect that your desires and my desires might come into conflict. Sir, if each of us has as our national objective, whether we are in tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, whether we live in the heights, whether we are Rastas, whether we are white or black, whether we are Moravian or Anglican, whether we are men or women, our common objective as Barbadians is to do that which builds the

common good of this country and this society, then I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I firmly believe that we would have done the best that we can humanly and possibly do without divine intervention for the individual lot of the average Barbadian.

I believe that it was that which was the guiding force of those who went before us. Sir, by having that as a guiding force, they were so able to create a society that is regarded by many as the strongest developing society in the world, or the most prosperous black country in the world, or having many of the attributes which those who do not know the spirit or the character of the Barbadian find difficult to believe if they are only looking at the encyclopaedia and seeing the size of 166 square miles and the population of 264 000 people. Sir, those small figures mean nothing unless you understand the spirit, the psyche and the values of the Barbadian people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill seeks to hold those up to the society and in so doing, Sir, says that if we act according to and reflect these attributes in the common cause of what is good for Barbados, then we cannot be wrong once we do that and once we maintain a strong faith in a higher being. Those who went before us had not the opportunities nor the resources to fight the challenges that we do today, but they had those attributes and they had that faith. I believe, Sir, that, irrespective of whenever challenges come before us, those attributes and that faith will, in fact, guide us safely.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and have pleasure in moving the reading of the Gold Award of Achievement Bill, 2001.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this Bill and to declare up front, Sir, that the whole concept of awarding people in Barbados will have to change from the top-down system to the bottom-up system.

We are in the age of globalization and trade liberalisation and we must recognise that for years, as a country, we have been compensating capital and we have been able to see capital as that force that allows us to develop. We have ignored the fact that capital and labour must go hand in hand. Sir, that is why, when we look at our award system, you tend to believe that those systems put in place are only for those who can contribute large sums of capital; and for those people who put their hands to the plough, there is no need to compensate them.

Sir, that is why we feel so strongly on this Side that we must recognise that in order for Barbados to develop, capital is not the problem any more and productivity must be seen as the major problem facing Barbados in the 21st century and we must put all the necessary incentives in place to make sure that the productivity level in this country is increased.

Sir, I have said all that to say this. If we continue to ask the agricultural labourers to continue to work hard in this country and continue to provide the necessary infrastructure to educate the public of Barbados but we do not recognise at the end of the day that it is the agricultural labourer and the fisherman who sometimes spend all of their hours working in the sun to make sure that this country is able to stand up and be counted on the world scene, Sir, at the end of the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those people are not recognised.

Sir, I am saying that in order for Barbados to develop we must use the bottom-up system. Sir, if we are to encourage people to put their hands to the plough, we must see that there are rewards for those persons who have worked hard to develop this country. Sir, the biggest problem in Barbados is that the majority of the people who have worked to put Barbados where it is have not been compensated for what they have done.

I am saying that you have to stop and recognise what those young people are doing today. Sir, they are rebelling. They are rebelling because when they look around themselves they can see the agricultural workers and the fishermen who for many years have spent many hours working in this country and they have not been acknowledged for the work which they have done for this country.
12.10 p.m.

When you talk about hope, Sir, how can you tell me that you can influence this country and the young people when we used to tell them to go to school, learn well and work hard and they will be compensated? When you look at the system in the country today, there is no evidence that that is true.

The evidence is, Sir, that if you have that capital, that Governments are prepared to come to Parliament and put the necessary incentives in place to make sure that the capital is in the country. But those people who provide the labour are neither seen nor recognized for what they are, and there is no compensation for those people.

I am saying, Sir, that in an age of globalization where we need to go and compete to keep Barbados where it is, or even better off, we have to change our attitudes to those persons. Take a week like this week where the seas are rough and the fishermen are still getting into their boats to go out and bring in thousands of flying fish to feed Barbadians. Do not care how rich or poor you are, they are still feeding Barbadians. But how many of us recognize the work of the fishermen who have to go out there and fight the high seas and the big waves? No, we take it for granted that that is their job to do and we feel that we should not compensate them, without recognizing that if we could put a system in place where those fishermen, after having their large catches,

could market their goods across Barbados and we would not have to look for the foreign exchange to buy somebody else's second-rate lamb or beef. Those fishermen are providing a valuable service, Sir, but how many times do we come to this Parliament and recognize that they are putting their lives on the line in providing a good service to Barbados so that this country can grow?

Do you know, Sir, when they bring the fish back to the island, we do not hear about foreign exchange. All that you are hearing is that they bring back "fish" and I want that foolishness to stop because a man can bring in a suitcase of foreign exchange into Barbados with a thousand conditions, but that fisherman who brings in, at this time, sixteen thousand flying fish or more, is saving this country valuable foreign exchange.

That is why I asked, if ever a fisherman was to get a catch of that magnitude, why is it that we feel that a guy, driving his car and recognizing the plight of the fisherman, cannot go and get some of the same fish and sell them to somebody else? But if they risk doing that, Sir, they can be prosecuted.

You see what I am telling you, Sir? This system is against the masses of this country. That is why I am calling on the Attorney General, not to say what I call chaos or not to write articles in the party's column talking about Kellman's chaos, or madness, or foolishness, but to recognize the seriousness of the point, because Mr. Deputy Speaker...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order, Sir. I have to put it into record. I do not write any column in any newspaper. I used to regularly do that, when there were just three of us trying to sustain the Barbados Labour Party after 1986. I have not written since 1991.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am glad to know that he has recognized the sense in the point about the abolition of licences and he has defended himself on this particular matter. I appreciate his point of order, Sir.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Well, each of us has a little madness in us and yours is larger than mine and everybody knows that by your utterances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, back to the main point and not the frivolous point on the Other Side. I am saying...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: People call me anything. They called Errol Barrow mad, they called Duncan O'Neale mad, they called Martin Luther King mad – all great men were called mad, so I am not worried.

Aside.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: But what you all confused with madness is foresight and that is what is lacking on the Other Side.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say this: we have now to recognize that if we are to give incentives as a country, the place we need to give incentives to now will be the masses and to encourage them to become involved in the productivity of the country.

We need to give them all the incentives necessary and I am not only talking about financial incentives, but also awarding them for their services. We must make them feel part of the society. We cannot continue, as soon as we hear the word masses to believe that we are speaking about the drop-outs in the society. That is not true, Sir, because the masses are the productive sectors of this country.

If you look at the sugar industry, the cement industry, the fishing industry – do not care what industry you speak about, Sir – it is the masses providing that golden opportunity.

Lately, I have been reflecting and the truth is, Sir, that if we – as the great excellent Errol Barrow once said – are to get close to Singapore, we must remove those licensing systems that we have in place at the moment and stop bright men from having to first go and apply for the right to work. This is foolishness.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in a country like Barbados, if a young man is employed and has two hundred dollars in his pockets and passes by a field where a planter is growing or reaping a particular crop and the product looks good enough for him, he should be able to take that money and buy the produce from that same farmer and then market that produce, without the farmer having to do that himself. He should not be bogged down with a system where he first has to stop and say he does not have a licence so he cannot sell. Those systems were put in place by certain persons who had an agenda, but the 28 of us cannot have that same agenda today.

That is why I am saying, Sir, that the biggest problem – and I agree with the former Member of St. Michael South, not the present one, because he does not understand the beauty of marketing...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I know that you are souse, but he is South.

So I am saying, Sir, and it was wonderful to understand and to hear the freshness and to know that when you speak there are other people out there who understand what you are talking about, like the Reverend on Sunday morning, who understood full well the importance of removing the licensing systems on vendors.

Therefore, I am saying Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the same way that duty-free concessions were given to the group with capital, those duty-free concessions might be given to the masses to help market the produce of the fishermen and farmer.

Imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we had a situation where anybody, knowing that they had an opportunity to purchase a van duty-free to sell fish or vegetables... The mere fact that you hear a duty-free van, Sir, many people will run after that fact.

But you know what is beautiful, Sir? The fishermen at this present moment have so many fish, what would happen? Those vans would be used to go right through Barbados and market the catches of the fisherman or the farmer.

Tell me something, Sir. If you have fresh vegetables or fish coming to you at the right price, would you leave your home when these items are coming to your door step and go into a supermarket to buy those same items? I say to you, no, you would not do it. So we in this country must understand that if we are to perform as a nation, we have to empower the masses. That is why it is not difficult for me to support this Bill but this Bill must be seen, not only as a Bill for politicians and the capital-class, but must also be seen as a Bill for the labourers also.

And I am not saying that the Other Side will not see it like this. I would believe that they are seeing it the way that I am seeing it and I have no doubts in that, but I am saying, Sir, that we need to understand that we need to empower the masses in this country if the country is to go forward.

We also have to recognize that the belief that we need to invite a lot of people to our country in order to develop it is not necessarily true. I personally believe that we need to look at what we have, reassess what we have and plan based on what we have. There is a lot of talk about inviting foreign

persons to build hotels, *et cetera*, when in truth and in fact, when we look at the total plant available to Barbados, we have a lot of wasted plant lying in this country. But do you know why we are not doing anything about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because when we look at it we do not see foreign exchange in the initial stage and that is why I am saying that foreign exchange cannot only be looked at directly, but indirectly also.

It was also wonderful to hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael South lately speaking about community tourism. What is amazing about the Honourable Member, Sir, is that when I was speaking about it during the Estimates, he was calling it foolishness, but all of a sudden, two weeks after... As I told the Honourable Member for St. John, one thing about the Honourable Member is that he would criticize it today and then two weeks after praise it. 12.20 p.m.

It was good to hear him on the air praising it and behaving as if he has always been a disciple of that particular policy. At least I cannot say the opposite for the Honourable Member for Christ Church West because when I spoke on this particular matter, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West spoke about Sheraton and a couple areas in his constituency that are involved in the same thing.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Regency Park and Amity Lodge, thank you. He could not criticise me like my honourable friend did. I am saying, Sir, that we need to look at the available plant and, before we think about expanding, we must maximise what we have at present.

Sir, it appears to me that the problem is because that particular plant lies in the hands of people whom you would make independent. Some people feel that you cannot make people independent but you must keep them dependent. I am saying that the Democratic Labour Party can never find itself in a situation where they want to see people as dependents. It must be a party prepared to make every single person in this country independent and that is what is needed at this time, not like the other party that believes that the dependency syndrome is the right syndrome. We have to see that independence is the syndrome that every single Barbadian must see.

No wonder, Sir, we would have introduced things like free secondary education because that was the platform to develop the masses and to give them the independence they needed. We have no problems with that because we believe it is better to hook a fish yourself than to depend on someone to give you a fish. That must be and will always be the policy of the Democratic Labour Party. It started as far back as Duncan O'Neale and it was taken up by the late Right

Excellent the Honourable Errol Walton Barrow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the politics of this particular issue cannot be seen only in the capital aspect of it, but it must be seen in the workers of Barbados. Sir, it hurts because when one looks at what is going on at the present moment, one gets the impression that workers are only people who can provide profits and after they have provided the profits for the employers, they are discarded.

I am saying, Sir, that if the employers have their impression, the Government and their committees who issue these awards cannot see it in that light. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what they must do, they must use a Bill like this to show the employer and the private sector the importance of labour in this particular matter and this is the best way to send a message to the private sector, by honouring some of those hard workers. I am not talking about hard workers at the top because they have always been taken care of, I am talking about the hard workers at the bottom.

Sir, let me say this. If you honour a man at the top, he is at the top already and nobody will regard that honour but if you honour a man at the bottom, the rest of the people around him would see that as an incentive to rise up in the society. I am saying that the time is right and, if we are to do things right, we have to do it by 2001.

We cannot continue to do things as we were doing them in the 18th Century. This is an age of globalization and we have to behave as if we are part of globalization and recognise the importance of all the sectors, and we cannot only continue to believe that capital is the only important factor.

Do you know what is also amazing, Mr. Deputy Speaker? When you consider that whenever you invite somebody to invest in Barbados, they want half of the country; but when you ask the masses to work in this country, their demands are not great. All they ask you, Sir, is for a fair wage but the investors do not ask you for a fair return only, they ask you for a fair return and all the possible incentives that will come with it.

Sir, you have to ask yourself whether it is not right for us now to have new economic thinking and to go back to the drawing board and recognise that sometimes it is better to have everything home-based, than to have the dependency syndrome on those externals.

Sir, we have to come to grips with what is going on in the world and recognise as a small nation that smallness is good also. What hurts me is that every time I listen to some people, I get the impression that because we are small, we

are nobody. Foolishness, Sir. Because we are small, we are special and our demands are not as great as others and it allows us to find that product or products that we can market and the expectations would not be as great as others. It is not how much you get, it is what you do with it and this country must recognise that we have been blessed and we have to start utilising what we have.

We feel, Sir, that if we apply to the Inter-American Development Bank or the World Bank and they do not give us a loan that we have been done an injustice. I am saying that is not true because, the truth is, I am one of those who strongly feel that our productive sectors must be developed to such a magnitude that we have to stop looking outside for help because whenever we get a loan from outside, we also get conditions that are not favourable to us.

Let me give you an example of what I speak. If we decide to build a fishing complex, the person now lending us the money wants to tell us who to give the work to. After that contract is given out, we cannot tell them who to employ, so at the end of the day, Sir, we only get the loan and the project completed but all the work and the materials come from somewhere else.

Am I to believe that we are gaining from that, Sir, whereas, if we were to do it ourselves, we would be able to award that contract and keep the majority of the money within our country? So we borrow the foreign exchange, we bring it to the country and by the time the contract is finished, the majority of the foreign exchange is back out.

That is not how financing projects is supposed to be, Sir. When we finance a project, we would expect that at the end of the contract, the majority of the foreign exchange remains within the country because we have the materials and the people within the country to maximise the savings of foreign exchange.

Sir, what is required at this time is a new thinking. We cannot continue to run this country as if we are back in the 18th Century and because our fore-masters and our fore-leaders did things in a particular way, we must continue to do it. What we require now are some exciting thoughts and ways of doing things in this country?

I am saying, Sir, that any country which has a strong roof and a poor foundation will crumble and I am warning this country that unless we do something to build the foundation of this country, we will come crumbling down. That is why I am saying to the Government that the priority at this time must be building a strong foundation and that is by making sure that the labourers who are plenty are strong enough to build and rise up in this country.

What is happening is that even though the foundation and the walls are greater, we are concentrating on putting all the capital on the roof, forgetting that the weight of the roof can bring the walls and the foundation down. And a warning to the wise is enough.

I am calling on this Parliament as a people to recognise that all the problems we appear to have are not too big for us to solve, but we must have the will and the commitment to solve those problems. And the only way we can solve those problems, Sir, is by coming up with creative ideas and solutions to solve those problems.
12.30 p.m.

This does not call for rhetoric, Sir. This calls for futuristic thinking which this Parliament is sometimes devoid of because we get so caught up in the day-to-day issues that we do not recognise that the world is not waiting on us. We feel that the only time we can deal with a particular problem is when it is in front of us, but that type of thinking will not carry this Parliament anywhere because the planning today is not for ourselves but is for those young children out there who have to come later and if we cannot see planning in that way then this country will not go forward.

So I hope that when this list is presented to me that we would have the right blend by having people from the top, some from the middle and some of the masses. If this is only for a particular group I can assure you, Sir, that I will be the first person to come to this Parliament and criticise it because there is no doubt that politicians do well, the middle class does well but the masses also do well for the country. That is why we cannot bring a Bill for any one group of people, whether they be black, white, brown or yellow, but we must bring a Bill for the total population of Barbados.

Now that we are on the Heroes issue, I want this position to be known. I do not support this foolishness – this my own wording – of people believing that because somebody has done something good in 2001 that anybody should be able to come in 3001 and through their eyes reverse what was judged as good at that point in time. I do not support that, Sir. I do not support any view either that would use the great Right Excellent Errol Barrow as a scapegoat to do damage to other people because I believe that the great Right Excellent Errol Barrow is not a scapegoat.

Sir, at this time this country must be able to see its National Heroes as National Heroes in the same way as people previously saw their National Heroes, and as the ones in the future must be able to see their National Heroes. We cannot judge the judgment of anybody else, we can only judge ourselves.

I think that we will do this country a disservice if we continue to believe that we can judge today, yesterday and tomorrow when it comes to issues like this. If we want to be futuristic, Sir, we have to be futuristic on our economic planning, not based on judgement on who should be a hero or who should have been a hero. That is not our judgement. We can only judge what we are dealing with today. We can tell people who we feel should be a hero now, but we cannot judge the judgement of those people who were around at that time or who will be around in the future. We will be abusing our rights when we do, and that is my opinion.

We must deal with the issue at hand and stop believing that we are some 'super power' and that we know the reasons why people did something previously and why people will be doing something in the future. We cannot, as a people, do that because what we are doing is leaving a foundation for those who will come after us to do the same thing that we did in our time.

Fate is a funny thing, Sir. This is a world that is being run on capital. I am hoping that my country Barbados would recognise that capital is not the only thing and move away from that thinking. We, as a people, will be well-served if we understood that the most important thing to a country is labour, because we as a people have never had capital in any abundance. If we fall for that folly then we will be trapping ourselves and we will be playing into the hands of those people whom we claim we do not want to play into their hands. The day that we allow capital to rule as it appears to do now, we, as a people, will be defeating ourselves.

Politicians on both Sides of this House would do well to take note because this world seems to believe that capital is the key. I do not believe that. It is not in my interest to believe that either, for the simple reason that if I ever get so foolish as to believe that, then I would have no reason to be in here, because the day that capital is key then people like myself would not be in this Place and I hope that the others will understand exactly what I speak of. A word to the wise is enough, Sir. That is why we, as a people, have to understand that the masses have an important base.

I hope that every single person in here who can hear me, even the strangers, especially those who use the pen, will fully understand what I am saying and will use it to their good advantage because even they themselves have to be protected.

I saw a story recently where, soon from now, we will be getting taxi drivers out of London. A couple of years ago people would have said to me that is not possible but...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You are saying that we will be getting the taxi and not the drivers. Well, the drivers will come too, with globalization. There is free movement of everything. You only have to start with the cars and then there will be a good reason why the chauffeurs will have to come.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: What I am saying, Sir, is that once there is a beginning, there will be an end and we as a people have to be very careful because previously we were told, when the hotels were being built in the island, that there would have been no need to bring in people to run the hotels. Now, the truth is, the hotels are here and the people are here with them as well.

I am hearing from the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central that the taxis will come but not the drivers. Let me tell you all something! A couple of months from now when the taxis arrive, you will see an ad in the newspaper that they are applying for a taxi driver. They will put in certain qualifications and you will hear that there were no suitable persons to drive this particular type of car and they are now applying for a work permit so that they can bring in somebody who can speak French, German ...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Have you heard what I am saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I heard the same thing about the maids too. You do not see the ads every week because they found a special way to get them in. So we have to be careful, Sir. We have to recognise that globalization is about giving the G7 countries a greater share of the market. Any time anybody asks you what is globalization, Sir, you can tell them that it is the command of the G7 countries to continue to control all of the smaller countries. Once you put that equation and that belief in your head, Sir, you cannot go wrong.

People believe that this is all about empowering the masses, which is foolishness. The only way the masses will be empowered is if individual governments create the necessary incentives for them to be empowered. That is why sometimes I have to take off my hat to those people in Canada for the simple reason, as I have said in here, that some of the best tourists we can get come from Canada. I have no doubt about that because when one looks at the financial history and the loans received by Barbados in concessions and so on and one looks at the Airport, one will recognise that if there was ever a country that had the welfare of Barbados at heart it was Canada. I am not saying that the United States of America and the United Kingdom

did not. The truth is that the terms and conditions placed by other countries on Barbados were never placed by Canada.

We have to know our friends. That is why politicians must be careful how they are used by other politicians. That is why when I hear people on the Other Side welcoming somebody and saying they want them to be part of CARICOM... It is all very good to say that you want them to be part of CARICOM but you also have to look down the road to see when they become part of CARICOM and they get their freedom, how they will treat you.

We must be careful of wolves in sheep's clothing. That is what I would say on this matter. You can judge a man by what he has done for you and what he will do for you but you also have to be careful of the man who pretends he is doing something for you and this country Barbados has to be very careful.

I admire the stance of Barbados where they want to have everybody but they also have to understand that, in the same way that there are petty jealousies in this country, in the world there are greater jealousies.
12.40 p.m.

Do not believe that because you do something to help somebody that automatically it will happen to you. This is foolishness. There is something called international politics and we as a country will well learn this. The OECD was not set up because they wanted to help small countries. That organisation was set up to make sure that the market shares of those countries are protected.

Sir, I said all that to say this. If we do not empower the people that need empowering then this country will not go forward. I say, Sir, that we cannot have globalization and not recognize that we have to stop and pay some attention to those people who fuel our economy. This myth that capital is the only thing that fuels the economy is just that. We as a people will have to understand that if we do not do it now, we will never get an opportunity to correct that.

This is why, Sir, every time we come to this Parliament to borrow money from outside, I am always very careful in warning the Government how and when not to borrow. Sir, a lot of people believe that people are lending you money like they used to do. This is not true. Sir, it is all about political control and a lot of the countries and organisations who want to lend you money are only lending you money because they want to keep you oppressed.

Sir, I am saying to small states to get their act together and start to pool their resources and start also to develop resources to help one another because they have a common problem, which means they should also have a common

policy. Large states will come together to keep their share and oppress the poor.

Sir, at this opportunity I would like to welcome back my good friend, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. It is good to have him back in the Chamber and I know that he will lend some good debating skills which were lacking for the last few weeks. Sir, I am saying that he would have enjoyed a speech like this if he were here a little earlier.

Sir, anyhow, I am saying that we as a nation, no matter how small we are, have to recognize how important we are. We as a nation have to look at those items that we think can help us to develop as a country. Sir, the amazing thing is that when you look at those items that can help us as a country, we realise that we have to depend on the workers to progress or produce those items for us.

Sir, we also need some marketing skills because they are sadly lacking in this country. We must also put the incentives in place to help develop those marketing skills.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Good boy, unlike you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying to you that we as a people must learn to appreciate people who we think are less than us. That is the whole problem. We pride ourselves in this country, Sir, as being better off and being more than some people. We have to stop that foolishness. We have to start seeing ourselves as equals and recognize that every single contribution is important in this country. As soon as we are able to do that, Sir, this country will go forward. But we feel that we must segregate people. This person is more important than the other person. That is not true, Sir, because if we continue in this trend we will be going against the Bible. The weakest link is important, Sir, and every square in an equation is important and every digit is important. We must recognize that.

Sir, that is why it pains me as a person to recognise that in this country we judge people on what they have and not what they can contribute. It pains me, Sir, and that is why this country will continue to flow down the drain no matter how much reserves we have. Because at the end of the day when we look at the productive sectors, Sir, we still recognise there is slippage. Do you know why, Sir? Because the people you expect to prop up the productivity are not doing anything in our interest to develop those people and to allow them to help us.

The masses are not looking to us for help. They are looking for an opportunity to help us. We believe that when it comes to the masses, they are a burden. They depend on

the Treasury. We do not stop and recognise that they are the ones fuelling the Treasury.

Sir, let me say this, that in a crisis time, it will be the masses who will remain here to keep the engines running. Those people with the capital will take up their suitcases and fly and sometimes you do not know when the suitcases have gone. Sometimes their suitcases leave before they do. A word of warning is important.

Tourism must be seen, as Errol Barrow once said, as a product of the people and for the people. That is why when the former Heywoods was developed, it was developed under a concept where small people would have been part of tourism.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Now I hear that nobody listens regarding Errol Barrow. No wonder the country is in trouble because he was too futuristic to listen to him. But I know that your Leader would not say that. He tries his best to listen and even tries to be like him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that we have to understand that, if we are to develop this nation, we have to develop its people and we have to empower its people.

As I said before, Sir, I will support this Bill but the Government must understand that this Bill must be wide ranging. It must not be seen as a Bill from the top down, but it must be seen as a Bill from the bottom up. We have to understand the importance of a Bill like this. There are too many people in our society who believe that they have contributed significantly to the growth of the country but they have not been rewarded. There are some who have not contributed anything but yet they have been rewarded.

Sir, I have a famous saying – “If a man is a millionaire and he gets nine more million, he is still a millionaire.” But if a man is a poor man and he becomes a millionaire, he is a millionaire and you can measure his growth but it is difficult to measure the growth of those other people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you that as long as we recognize the salt of the earth we will recognize the prosperity of the earth. I thank you very much, Sir.

SUSPENSION

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, two other Honourable Members have indicated their wish to contribute to this debate. I will possibly speak also.

I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 2 o'clock p.m. for lunch.

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

The question that the House be now suspended until 2 o'clock p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly. 12.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief on this matter, but I want to lend some support, though I do not think it is entirely necessary to add to the comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy relative to this particular piece of legislation.

We are not against the existence or the further development of national awards to be conferred on persons who have made a contribution to the development of Barbados beyond the call of duty. My concern, first of all, is that despite the Government having before it more transparent methodologies for the selection of persons for national honours we are in fact returning to the same method of selection which exists in relation to all national honours, that is, that the Prime Minister advises the Governor-General and the power is vested in the Governor-General to confer the award.

We believe that there should be a wider, not informal, process of consultation. In other words, the Prime Minister, based on this legislation, can take into account only his own views, whereas we feel that there should be a much wider process of consultation utilised and enshrined within the legislation to give effect to the selection of persons who should be entitled to receive these awards. I say that because there is still a lot of scepticism about the way national honours are conferred in Barbados.

While I have no problem with national honours being conferred on persons for contributions beyond the call of duty, I have great difficulty with national honours being conferred on persons simply for doing what is their responsibility. We have a system in which functionaries, from judges to a few tiers down, are often granted significant national honours simply for doing the functions which they are paid to do and not for extending themselves beyond the call of duty to some higher national purpose. Some of those individuals may have no social activities whatsoever. They may be patrons of no organisation or they may not be involved in community work in any area. It would be

invidious of me to single out any one individual. Likewise, we have from time to time honoured Members of Parliament and we have in here two members who have received knighthoods. I supported those knighthoods not because of their political work. It had nothing to do with that. They were paid to do that work and were duty-bound to do it. I supported it because both of them, I think, also brought to the development of Barbados skills and abilities that went beyond the call of duty. That is why I supported it.

I would not support the selection of a man to receive a national honour simply because he was the Prime Minister of Barbados. That would not be enough. There would have to be some thing about that contribution that was so significant that it went beyond the call of duty.

There is a lot of scepticism because in recent times one has seen attempts to honour persons for being in public life for a long time. If I were the Honourable Member for St. Thomas' close personal advisor, I would have been able to identify him when the Centennial Honours were being conferred, even though it had nothing to do with him because he did not select himself. Let us get that clear. I am not criticising him but I would have identified a number of other areas for which he should have been given that honour other than his contribution to public life by being involved in politics.

The development of calypso, his knowledge of cricket, I can identify. He laughs at that, but those things are true. There may be many other areas but when you identify the contribution to public life, somebody can say, "You mean you are honouring somebody for doing what we pay them to do and what they are asked to do?" We have to make sure that it is always clear to the public, particularly when persons are being honoured in relation to their contribution to public life, that we are making the point that they functioned beyond the call of duty or made some unique contribution in an area of national life that deserves credit.

It would be nonsensical if it were being contemplated for somebody to give an award like this one to the Prime Minister of Barbados for the position he took in relation to the OECD matter. I am not saying that was being contemplated, but it would be nonsense because the Prime Minister of Barbados is doing no more than any Prime Minister of this country would be expected to do. If the Honourable Member for Christ Church South were still Prime Minister, I anticipate, would expect and would support him because I believe that he would take exactly the same stance that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, on behalf of the people of Barbados, is taking.

There is nothing unique about that stance and it is not unusual that Barbados is in that position either. The fact that other Caribbean leaders may not be viewed as having that

stature or that outlook is not unusual either. Barbados has always in a sense been out there leading in these issues and there is no special credit to the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and therefore if, as I say, somebody were contemplating giving a national honour for what the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter is paid to do, and in the context of the rest of the Caribbean paid reasonably well to do, then it would not get my support. You would have to demonstrate that the person is being selected because they went beyond the call of duty.

You could not honour the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West for his contribution to public life as a politician, but if you honoured him for what he does on Fridays on the radio and for going out into communities and bringing to the attention of those persons who no longer go into communities the pearls of wisdom which flow from guys who assemble to play dominoes or whist or whatever, I would say I support it. But I am not supporting the concept of taking national honours and contriving to give them to serving politicians for doing what they are paid to do, what they have asked to do and what is expected of them by the persons who elect them to Parliament. Let us make that abundantly clear.

This brings us to the other question of the large number of persons in Barbados who receive no national recognition for the contribution that they make to national life at any level even though they are persons whom everyone in the community knows have contributed to that national development.

The way in which the Government went about requesting nominations for persons to be considered for this national award does not make sense either, unless you are going to publish the nominations that the public can look at them and there can be a process which includes some input once the nominations have been made. I am very worried because I have been hearing in my sleep, even before this Bill had been brought here, that attempts have been made, in my view, to subvert the way in which this particular national award should be granted, and I do not like it. It is not a decision for the Cabinet alone. It is not a decision, in my view, for the Prime Minister alone. If we have a serious system of national awards, then enshrined in your legislation must be some process by which there is more popular involvement, because if the system of selection does not itself have integrity, then the persons who are selected are then diminished.

We know what is happening in the United Kingdom with their system of national honours, the system of cash for honours. You could buy certain honours despite all the paraphernalia, making it appear as though it is so....

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes, fellows who make a big contribution are on the list. The top 10 contributors are all knighted and the top three all end up in the House of Lords. That is known and that has brought the entire system so into disrepute that now, in reforming the House of Lords, the Government of the day, which is supposed to be a progressive Government, cannot untangle itself from a history of patronage.

They then discovered that there are a lot of frustrated politicians who will never run for office, who will never be patron of anything, will never dirty their hands or stand up in a rum shop or go and look at people's toilets or their drainage or anything and who really believe that they can so subvert the process that in one donation to an election campaign or to some cause they should be entitled to be elevated. I believe that they bring the entire system of national honours into disrepute when that kind of wheeling and dealing takes place.

The two bases on which I have concerns, as I said, are that I do not believe that people should be honoured for what they are paid to do. It must be manifest that the contribution goes beyond the call of their normal duties.

2.15 p.m.

The second thing that I think is important is that if we so diminish and subvert the way in which national honours are awarded in this country, then we end up diminishing the person who is deserving of the honour and bringing the entire system into disrepute.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that it is vital when we are dealing with issues of national significance and important national development that we have to be extremely careful how we go about it. This Government has had a long history of leaking information to the Press. The most recent scenario is the leaking of a small section of the report of the National Reconciliation Committee. They leaked the section which revealed that 'white' Barbadians have fears about Government's attempts to redefine this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to say this in another place but I also want to make it clear that I believe that the approach by this Government – of always seeking to put spin and propaganda out there simply for the purpose of looking to the next election and how they can manipulate and influence public opinion – is what is also contributing to the way people are viewing national honours in our country at this time.

We need to uphold national institutions and elevate them beyond that kind of partisanship and cheap politics. We all know what the Government's objective is. There is a

popular phrase which says that you cannot run with the mongoose and chicken at the same time. The Barbados Labour Party Government wants to give the impression that we are redefining Barbados and that white people fear us. In the politics of Barbados there are many people who would believe that a Government which white people do not like would have to be a Government that is in favour of the black majority or those who are not white.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not like it because I think that the Government, at the end of the day, is playing fast and loose with the emotions of Barbadians and rather than contributing to national reconciliation and development, the Government is seeking to use all of these things to continue to manipulate public opinion and very often subvert public will.

The National Reconciliation Committee was established right after the Nelson statue debate as a means of neutralising the people who took hard line positions on the removal of Nelson's statue. It could only be a spineless Government that, instead of doing what it promised to do a year after long debates in here with people jumping up and down with all kinds of anger and indignation about Nelson's statue, saying how they were going to recast Barbadians because it was a psychological impediment to have Nelson overlooking the main commercial district... One year later Nelson's statue still stands overlooking that commercial district. The Government cannot, as a matter of accountability, tell the country what time frame it has for the removal of that statue and the relocation of it because it was propaganda and spin, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was all a show seeking to give the impression that the Government was so redefining the national character as to give effect to the aspirations of the black majority in this country. When they found out that there were some within that majority who were uncomfortable, they decided to set up a committee and put the most vocal persons on that committee because, as long as they were on the committee, it would be wrong for them to be at the same time out there in the public domain taking those hard positions because people would ask if they are on the committee and whether the view was put before the committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Committee has reported – a Committee that was to do so much to engender national reconciliation and focus on an agenda for the future – but before Parliament has seen the report, the Government leaks the report to the Press.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member has imputed improper motives to the Government in suggesting that the Government has acted in bad faith and that some member, or members, of the Government has leaked some report to the

Press. I do not know what he is talking about because I was not here last week but I take offence to the imputation that is being cast on the Government, Sir. I ask that the words be withdrawn.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know it was not the Opposition that leaked it because we did not have it. We have a two-party system in this country and, therefore, if it was not the Opposition, then it was the Government. I did not say it was the Attorney General because if he was not here he could not have done it. As I said, the way in which it was leaked tells me it is one of those skilful, manipulative processes which the masters of spin and propaganda engage in. It will not engender diversity because what it will do is create resentment. People will read that and say that the white people want more and that they want Barbados cast in their image.

On the other hand, there are people who will take the position on the other side of the divide rather than what the Government said it wanted to do, which in this environment is almost impossible, which is to engender a process of serious discussion about race relations in Barbados and help people to understand that the way forward is going to involve diversity, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East constantly says, in which people are entitled to promote those aspects of their heritage that they feel most proud about, all under the process of national development objectives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East this morning. All I can say is that I heard her because I have heard all of that before. Nelson's statue is still there. The Government that exists and has been in office for six years cannot stand up on a single occasion in this House and identify any measure of economic empowerment, economic democracy or step that it has taken to recast social and economy relationships in this country despite the fact that all the political parties have agreed that is the way forward.
2.25 p.m.

The question of economic empowerment, which we all said is important, cannot get elevated to the top of the agenda despite the fact that we all say that it is vital. We all recognise that the people who wield economic power wield political power.

That is how they can subvert the national honours system in Britain and to some extent subvert it in Barbados too because the guys who hold economic power hold real power in Barbados. Let us understand that.

Sir, unless something is done about that, all the talk about national honours will be empty and meaningless because it would mean that all that our National Heroes have

said and all of the pious proclamations made last year in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber, all of the lectures and debates, all of the activities which seek to promote national unity and the respect for diversity would be meaningless because what people will be seeing is smoke and mirrors, illusions and facades, but nothing will change in relation to their status in terms of the economic development of Barbados. I am extremely concerned about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is why I felt that it was important for me to intervene in the debate to reiterate very strongly the point made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy about a bottom-up approach.

Sir, the selection of persons for national honours in Barbados does not mean that they are honoured for their duty; they are honoured where they have gone beyond the call of duty. The process should ensure the kind of transparency in our national honours system where it is not so diminished by economic or political considerations that the holders of national honours end up being tarnished by those who receive national honours, not on the work that they have done but on the basis of how best they can finance election campaigns.

Sir, the third point is that this legislation needs to be infused with more transparent processes for the selection of persons, which will involve a selection process where the names are published. Sir, before a committee meets, they would know that they are considering 'X', 'Y' or 'Z'. The committee can then meet and select one of those individuals and, in my view, the recommendation to the Prime Minister should be informed by that selection. It should not be at his discretion to overrule that decision unless, of course, he is being selected himself, then he will have a right to overrule it. As I said, I doubt very much that there will be any reason to select the Honourable Member for St. Peter for an award like this for doing what is his duty to the people of Barbados. In that regard, that issue obviously will not arise on this occasion or, I assume, at any time in the future.

Sir, those will be our principal concerns and we would not oppose this piece of legislation but would recommend to the Government that it considers those amendments.

Thank you.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would not seek to engage the Honourable Member for St. John's major aspects of his contribution to this debate. It is certainly my duty to shed a little light on one narrow aspect of it.

This question of national honours is not new. It is a system that is thousands of years old and has always generated a great deal of emotion and passion. As a student

of the classics, I am aware of the award of national honours in the days of ancient Greece and provincial Rome. There is a lot of literature of that period that shows the strong feelings of tension among sectors of the community, one way or the other.

Sir, in a sense it is like cricket in the Caribbean. Everybody has an opinion. Sir, you give everybody a chance to pick a West Indies cricket team and everybody will pick a team and each one will be different. Some principles remain but others would be changed and each person will argue fervently that his choice is correct and that the others do not know what they are doing.

Sir, there is an old Latin phrase "*quot homines, tot sententiae*," many men, many minds. Therefore, whenever the list of honourees is available, there will be a small section of the Barbadian community who would have a quarrel with a name here or there. I say a small section because generally the people of Barbados accept the names of persons honoured. At Independence time when the names of people are honoured, people generally accept them. Sir, that is not to say that there is not a criticism now and then, but generally they accept them. Sir, the reason why they accept them is because those who recommend persons for honours, in my view, are people who have no axe to grind; they are people who are mature and respected people in this community; who by virtue of their experiences, and occasionally expertise, are interested in doing the right thing.

The system has not changed. This system has been going on for many decades. Therefore, I am troubled by the comments of the Honourable Member for St. John when he talks about subversion of the honours system in Barbados. If they subvert them in Britain, they subvert them in Britain. I do not know of any actual or potential threats and subversion to the system in Barbados.

Perhaps, it should be known, since a lot of this is cloaked in secrecy, that both political parties are represented on the National Honours and Decorations Advisory Council. Sir, I am doing something that I really do not want to do and should not have to say. In view of the comments made by the Honourable Member for St. John which will find their way into the public domain through the media and otherwise, people will begin to look at the system and say, "Yeah, we hear that it is not transparent. It is subverted; it is political and otherwise influenced; people who put money into campaigns get honours whereas those who make honest contributions do not." Sir, that will go abroad. Therefore, I believe that I have a responsibility to try to clear up some of it and hope that I succeed. Therefore, I am saying something that I would rather not say.

I have been a Member of the National Honours and Decorations Advisory Council for many years. I was a Member when the Democratic Labour Party was the Government. I have been a Member when the Barbados Labour Party has been the Government. I have dealt with the representatives of the DLP, whether nominated through the Prime Minister or the Democratic Labour Party Government. I have worked with those people and I can honestly say, and I believe that the Honourable Member for St. John would have to accept this from me.

Sir, if I thought that it was not operating fairly and there was 'hanky panky', I believe that the Honourable Member for St. John believes that he would expect me to say that, and I would say it. Not privately but publicly, I would say it. And I have not seen any evidence of that. I am seeing a Council that invites the public to submit, on an annual basis, those persons who they think are suitable for National Honours and indeed the level on which they should be awarded.

1.35 p.m.

The public is asked to do this, then submissions are made to the Council because the Council sits over a number of meetings and scrutinizes the various nominees and at the end they make recommendations.

Now, the Honourable Member for St. John made a point – and perhaps he can get me on that too – and that is, I believe, that when the Council makes representations that those representations should be honoured. The point is that the law does not say that. I would like the law to be changed, because you cannot get a number of experienced, respected citizens to sit down and go through a long process and come up with these things, but we still have to wait to hear whether they are accepted or not. But that is the law and it is the law that has obtained for many years, under both Administrations.

It was good, no doubt, of the Honourable Member for St. John when the Leader of DLP Government wanted to inject whom he wanted and to cross out who was recommended, but apparently there had been a change of position on this. However, I can say in this Parliament...

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: No, I came in when you were half-way through...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On point of order. I said that the Government has the benefit of transparent methodology as recommended by the Constitutional Reform Commission, therefore it should be injected into this Bill. That is all I have said. So I am not arguing that this system

under the DLP was fair and it is now unfair. I do not make those kinds of arguments.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I swerve slightly, there are a few things that I would like to get in because I would like to go abroad. Why Governments have failed in the past to let the public know about these things so that they could have understood how the system works, I do not know, so I am stepping out.

It is important to know that on the National Advisory Decoration and Honours Council the members are appointed by legislation. It is not a mere group of persons thrown together whose advice is taken or not by the respective minister. The legislation set out is a serious legislation and I believe that persons who get instruments under the legislation to do the work we are talking about... Previously I have made that point.

But I do want to say, Sir, before dealing with this specific Bill before Parliament, that we must not knock the system because one or two nominees may not meet the perceived criteria of individuals. In other words, if we are dealing with the system and we are going to talk about the system, let us deal with that. If we are dealing with individuals who do or do not get honours, let us deal with that separately.

In my view, the system is a good system although there are ways of making improvements and we have to be careful that we do not throw out the baby with the bath water. And we would do that, Sir, if we make the kind of pejorative comments about our Honours system by the use of words such as 'subverting', and 'political and partisanship considerations'. Anyone who checks the List of National Honours from 1990 can look through the List and see which Government was in or out, and will see there has been a fairly good representation of persons getting National Honours across the spectrum – a few quarrels, but generally we can see that they have been done in a manner that will do justice to right-thinking persons in this country.

I mentioned earlier that persons are invited to submit their entries. Advertising is repeatedly done and every name that is submitted is considered. More to the point, Sir, each one is considered according to the particular category in which the recommendation was made and the Committee will see that there is an effort to make sure that a wide range of interests and activities across Barbados is represented: agriculture, unions, business, sports, education, health, the whole range is considered and you will see generally they are fair representative of a cross section of interests and activities in this country.

There is a problem that I have with our Honours system which I have voiced from time to time, but publicly, for the first time. I am concerned that Barbados is becoming over-honoured. I know that other people take the contrary. I am reminded, Sir, of the French *Legion d'Honneur*. They had given out so many of those honours in France that persons who got them were embarrassed because everybody else seemed to have them, and those persons who had not gotten them were embarrassed because everybody seemed to have them, except the persons who should have them. Therefore, I think that if we are going to continue to consider the integrity of our National Honours and to ensure that our Honours are respected and based on worth and merit, that we are not going to increase the numbers by any great amount.

Now, this brings me directly to this Bill. I have only seen the Bill since I came in after lunch. I really believe that this Bill deals with something – it is a redundancy. I do not believe that we need to have any Gold Award of Achievement for meritorious service at the time of Heroes Day.

My view – I do not speak for the Government, I speak from the lofty position at the end of the Back Benches – is that Barbados already has a fairly large number of Awards being given on an annual basis and I do not think that we should try to devalue the honours that we give by having a super-abundance of Honours.

More to the point in relation to Heroes Day, my own view, Sir, is that Heroes Day is a time for national focus on our National Heroes and that nothing should be done to distract Barbadians from focussing on our National Heroes. This is their time.

I do not know, Sir – and I am sure that somebody will tell me, I never close my mind to these things – why there is need for us on Heroes Day to have another award, from among the same persons whose names are put up for National Awards at Independence time. Because there are no new names, they are all the same set of persons. Why do you have to single out another one again for this particular Award?

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if we look for persons who have met the criteria, those persons meeting the criteria are persons who already would have had very high National Awards bestowed on them. So I do not know if this is the giving of extra Awards to the persons who would have already had high National Awards in this country, or whether we are 'dropping the bar' – to use the cliché that is being used these days – to get a person who does not reach the standard of those who are getting high honours, to say we want to give them Awards. Then why a National Heroes Day?

Now I want, very quickly, to deal with a point made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy about honours being “bottom-up” rather than “top-down”. I cannot agree with him more, Sir. I believe that the “bottom-up” is a good approach, but he and I would have to decide what we mean by “bottom”. That would have to be defined for me because, certainly, there are a number of persons across this country who have given outstanding service to this community of Barbados who do it unheralded and unsung and are not, in my view, people at the bottom. That is not the way I see them.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: I do not know. We have to be very careful about this thing about “bottom”, because when you talk about “bottom-up” in the Honours system and start to give people who deserve honours, we are going to start off telling them that they are at the bottom and “anyhow, do not mind that you are at the bottom we are still going to look after you.”
2.45 p.m.

The Centennial Honours of this year, in my view, represented a very good effort by the Council to recognise people all across this country, including people from St. Lucy...

Aside.

Mr. L. R. TULL: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is dealing with the honours just as the Honourable Member for St. John mentioned. You do not dole it out now, give St. Peter so many and St. Lucy so many. It cannot work that way. We are one country.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. George South is misleading the House by giving the impression that I am saying that there is only one person in St. Lucy suitable to be getting an award. I would like the Honourable Member to withdraw those remarks and to recognise that the contributions of the people from St. Lucy are so numerous that one award cannot compensate for all the hard work that they have contributed to this country, and continue to contribute.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. L. R. TULL: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, my good friend, knows that this Government is well disposed to the people of St. Lucy, including the

politicians in St. Lucy. I drove down in St. Lucy and saw ‘Kellman Road’. This Government took down a street sign that was down there for perhaps the whole of a century and changed it to ‘Kellman Road’...

Aside.

Mr. L. R. TULL: ...so you understand that not only one person was honoured and to answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the Honourable Member for St. George South is misleading the House by giving the impression that the Government of today changed that road to my road. It was not a Government. It was a person, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, who recognised the contribution at that time...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please proceed.

Mr. L. R. TULL: The Honourable Member for St. Andrew in his capacity as Minister of Public Works and therefore with responsibility for the naming of public roads, named a road in St. Lucy, Kellman Road. That is a fact, Sir, and the Honourable Member for St. John, when he raises the question that no politician should be honoured, is taking exception to the road being named after his colleague sitting on his left.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. No politician should be honoured for his contribution to public life. I said that it is not fair to the general public to be honouring people for what they are paid to do. If you are retired from public life or if you identified an area of contribution, like to the development of calypso...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I pointed out the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. I mean, there are a number of things you could look at but when I read the Centennial Honours and saw “for the contribution to public life”, I said that does not, to my mind, resonate the way it should because there are many other reasons why they could have honoured him.

Sir, I do not think that we should honour the Honourable Member for Christ Church South for his contribution to public life only. He went beyond the call of duty in some other areas: the practice of law, his contribution to local government, the Oistins Fish Festival. I should not have to list those things but all of them were things done

beyond the call of duty and the public needs to understand that you are Honouring them for that and not for what they are paid to do.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not go down that road. I am just disagreeing with the Honourable Member for St. John who seems to think that no politician or public officer in this country should be given an order for public service. I do not agree with that. To tell the whole public service that they cannot be honoured for their contribution to public service in this country is ludicrous to me and I do not buy that.

I want to wind up, Sir, because I do not think that this really merits all the passion that we have heard on some sides so I just want to put it in perspective. I wanted to tell this Parliament and, by extension, the people of Barbados that they can continue to have some confidence in their National Honours system and despite the thoughtless and irresponsible attacks made on the integrity of the system, it is a system that works as well as it can work under the circumstances. It does not work under one Government. It has worked under a number of Governments. It has received the approbation of many people who have looked at it and have seen it operating alongside the National Honours systems of other countries.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that this might be a convenient time for me to take my seat.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the intervention of the Honourable Member for St. George South and I think he has put some of the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition in true perspective and he has spoken from a position of an insider who has been on the National Honours Committee for a considerable number of years.

I want however, Sir, to respond to one or two points made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. So far as I am aware, and I have become aware of this in the last six years, this Government, rather than have the Honours Committee itself choose or develop the list of persons to be honoured, has invited the public at large to make recommendations. There are forms which are distributed at the Post Offices and you can go and fill one out and send it up to the Cabinet Office, I believe it is, and make a recommendation for someone to be considered. Now that seems to me to be the

first mark of a sincere attempt at having large scale participation in the system.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas is misleading the House by giving the impression that in order to get someone honoured all you have to do is go to the Post Office, get an application form and submit the name of the person. I would like the Honourable Member for St. Thomas to clarify that.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, how could I clarify? I am saying that the system that I have certainly been aware of, for the past six years, is one which provides for public involvement to the extent that the public is invited to make their nominations to the Honours Committee for consideration.

2.55 p.m.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy has a chance, and has had it for the last six years, to recommend to the National Honours Committee some of those people whom he thinks are worthy of honours. I am saying that the way the process is done is that there are forms which are distributed at post offices around the country for the convenience of the public and that they can fill out the forms and send them in.

The second aspect of the speech made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was that he said...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: ...that there is no recognition in the Honours system of the small man. Again, I will have to agree with that and recall that over the last six years that may have been the case when his party formed the Government but a concerted attempt has been made by the National Honours Committee in the last six years to recognise, particularly at Independence when there are a number of awards given, the contributions to the national effort by small people in this country.

I can recall, I do not follow these things, Sir, but I can think of joiners, carpenters, tailors, musicians, shopkeepers, one from my constituency, Mr. Thorne and the fisherman from Silver Sands, Mr. Nurse, who were recognised for their contributions. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy talked about the fishermen and said that we do not recognise the fishermen but Mr. Nurse from Silver Sands, who is a fisherman, was honoured and I remembered a boat builder being given an award in the last two years or so.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I do not mind where they come from. The fact is that time was when these kinds of people were recognised for their contributions. There was a lady who got a Centennial Honour who has been a fish vendor. She is from St. Lucy.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be happy about that.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Oh, he said he recommended her. Well, if he recommended her, he should be glad that he made a recommendation which was accepted by the Government.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Taxi drivers have been recognised too.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, I do not want to delay the debate and I am not getting into personal matters. I think I would prefer not to couch this debate in personal terms, Sir.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is giving impression to the House that this debate was slanted in personality, Sir, and that is misleading the House.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member, proceed.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George South, who has far more experience of these matters than I, is of the view that perhaps there are too many honours. I cannot make that judgement, Sir. I think that a case can be made for the view that National Heroes Day as a day of substantial significance in Barbados could also be the occasion on which persons in the community can be recognised for their contributions.

Now, as a country that still recognises the Queen as the Head of the Commonwealth, and the Head of Barbados for that matter, we have been accustomed not only to celebrating the Queen's birthday as was done Saturday night but also to recognising that at some point during the year, I think it is usually around June, Barbadians are conferred with honours granted by the Queen. So we have the Queen's birthday

honours and we have the Independence honours.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Therefore, in principle, I see nothing wrong with using the occasion of National Heroes Day for recognising someone who has given outstanding service to the country in the year prior to the particular National Heroes Day. This award is not, as I understand the legislation and indeed the policy behind the legislation, one that looks back over the whole life and work of a person. Those criteria would be recognised at Independence time for national awards. This is limited to contributions made in the year immediately prior to the grant of the award. So it is time bound by a year. So it would be for someone who is outstanding in the year 2000 rather than for somebody who is outstanding in the year 2001. I think one has to have a careful appreciation of the limits of the legislation which defines the parameters of the criteria.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to wind up this debate and to thank all Honourable Members who participated. I believe that there is general support for the principle of honouring persons whose commitment to sacrifice, whose dedication, whose selflessness and commitment to excellence, as Clause 5 of the Bill sets out, is generally supported.

I note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy but I do believe that the two preceding speakers, in the Honourable Member for St. George South and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, have adequately dealt with the concerns raised by the Leader of the Opposition, in particular, as it relates to the manner in which honours are conferred.

Let me say for the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am charged with leading the debate on this Bill but I do not sit on any Honours Committee, I do not know who sits on the Honours Committee and I have no role to play, other than as an ordinary citizen in the submission of a name, as to whosoever shall be granted any honour at any time, now or in the future. I want to make that abundantly clear.

My Ministry would facilitate the process because National Heroes Day is a part of national celebrations but, as the Honourable Member for St. George South stated so eloquently, it is a system that has endured across time and across Governments and it is a system where persons treat their task with the utmost seriousness and dedication and this system has been improved upon in the last few years by the requirement that allows any Barbadian to nominate a person

whom they feel is fit for consideration for a national honour. I do believe that there may well be a case for greater transparency, as the Leader of the Opposition said, in terms of whose names are submitted and otherwise ... that has to be determined with full debate and this Bill could not be amended on the whimsical notion that that was the way to go forward at this stage.
3.05 p.m.

In respect of the comments of the Honourable Member for St. George South as to 'why another honour?', I believe in my opening speech that I dealt extensively with the point that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas just made that the honour that is being conferred by this Bill is specifically limited to reward activities of a person in the year preceding, whereas the honours given in the context of the Independence national celebration can reflect any amount of time and are not time bound as Clause 5 makes this Bill.

Equally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that we do not believe, and I certainly do not believe, Sir, that the conferment of this additional award waters down the system of national honours in Barbados and I made the point earlier that the ability to recognise the virtues that are established in Clause 5 – diligence, sacrifice, dedication to service and commitment to excellence, either in community life or in the improvement of economic and social conditions – are virtues that we believe have to be highlighted by us as a society, given the challenges that are facing us both in the society and in the economy, and that in so doing people will aspire to these virtues through their behaviour, in what they do and what they say and how they think and, on an ongoing basis, every year feel that in the same way they can be eligible for the nomination of this Gold Award of Achievement because it is not limited to those in the higher echelons of leadership in the society, but it is available to each and every Barbadian if their actions and behaviour so reflect these virtues in the year preceding.

In those circumstances, I do not believe that this is any watering down of our national honours systems but, in fact, seeks to propel further those virtues exhibited by the National Heroes of Barbados and in those circumstances tries to create an environment where that will be the hallmark of what we consider to be the actions of a good Barbadian.

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

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

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 6 were called and passed.

Clause 7 was called.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, in Clause 7(2) I see a grammatical or typographical error. I think we should delete "s" from the word "means". Normally, you would say "means" if it began this section G.A. But it says, "the letters G-A means". If we delete the "s"... Once we have pluralised it to say "the letters", you have to say "mean".

I beg to move that the "s" be deleted from the word "means" in Clause 7(2).

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

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Gold Award of Achievement Act, 2001.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that brings us to the end of Government's Business for the day. I beg to move that this House do adjourn until Tuesday, May 8th, 2001 at 11.00 o'clock in the morning.

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

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR
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Mr. Deputy Speaker announced that he was in receipt of Accounts and Statements for the months of October and November, 2000 prepared by the Accountant General.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE
GOVERNOR-GENERAL 2

Mr. Deputy Speaker announced that he was in receipt of a letter from the Acting Governor-General dated 19th April, 2001 informing the House that His Excellency the Governor-General has been granted further leave from 19th April, 2001 to 29th April, 2001 and that the Acting Governor-General would continue to perform the functions of the office of Governor-General during that period.

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2. Customs Tariff (Amendment) Order, 2001.
3. The Financial Administration (Public Enterprise Investment Fund) Order, 2001.
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5. Annual Report of the Barbados Fire Service for the year 1999.

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ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

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SIMMONS, Hon. D. A. C. (St. Thomas)
THOMPSON, Mr. D. J. H. (St. John)
TULL, Mr. L. R. (St. George South)