
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, June 05, 2001.

PRESENT

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.), (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs) (Minister of the Civil Service)

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)

Sir Harold St. JOHN, K.A., Q.C., LL.B.

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

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)

Mr. G. W. Payne

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.) L.E.C., J.P. (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. R. D. MARSHALL (Minister of Public Works and Transport)

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

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prayers were taken by Rev. J. J. S. Atherley.

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

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, May 22, 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 Tuesday, May 22, 2001, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am in receipt of Accounts and Statements for the month of January, 2001, as prepared by the Accountant General.

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Report of the Committee for National Reconciliation.
2. Report of the Committee established to advise on a Policy Framework for a new Public Service Act.
3. Report prepared with regard to queries raised on the operations of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in the Auditor General's Report for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2000.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give notice of the following Resolutions:

1. Resolution to take note of the Report of the Committee for National Reconciliation.
2. Resolution to take note of the Report of the Committee established to advise on a Policy Framework for a New Public Service Act.

MOTIONS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been in communication with HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER, and I beg to move that the leave previously granted by this Honourable House to His HONOUR be extended to June 30, 2001.

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

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If that is the will of the House, so let it be.

SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Government Business is now the Order of the day.

ORDER NO. 6

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2001

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this piece of legislation, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2001, along with the Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulation, 2001, seeks the approval of this House in order that the mandatory wearing of seat belts and the use of safety seats be incorporated into the road travelling laws of this country.

Seat belts are intended to reduce the severity of injuries suffered by occupants of vehicles in road accidents. They are designed to retain the occupants of the vehicles in their seats, preventing them from being thrown about inside the vehicles or from being jugged through the windows of the said vehicles.

Seat belts are a very effective safety measure. It is estimated, Sir, that front seat belts have saved thousands of lives and tens of thousands of serious injuries since their use became compulsory. It is also estimated that rear seat belts have saved hundreds of lives and thousands of serious injuries since 1991.

In 1967, Sir, all new cars, and those manufactured since the 1st January 1965, were required, by law to be fitted with front seat belts. The first proposal for the compulsory wearing of seat belts was made in 1973. However, it was not until the 31st January, 1983 that the use of seat belts in the front of cars became compulsory.

Originally, this was for a trial period of three years but the trial period was so successful that the compulsory wearing of front seat belts became permanent in 1986.

Sir, new cars have had to be fitted with rear seat belts since April, 1987. On September 1, 1989, it became compulsory for children under the age of 14, travelling in the rear of a car, to use seat belts or some appropriate child restraint, if so fitted. From the 1st July, 1991, the law requiring rear seat belts to be used was extended to include adults in the rear seats of cars and taxis. The use of seat belts by drivers and front seat passengers is very high with over 90 percent of such people using these seat belts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a fact that the wearing of seat belts saves lives. There is justification in the wearing of seat belts. In Barbados, although there is a dearth of empirical data, observation suggests that there is some correlation

between non-use of seat belts and the increasing traffic injuries and fatalities experienced in this country.

For example, last year we had two serious accidents on our Highways where, in each of these accidents, we lost four lives of young people, none having reached the age of 26. One of these accidents, Sir, was at the roundabout by St. Thomas Church, where, in the wee hours of the morning, a small car ran into a wall in that area and killed four people.

Again, late last year, on the Spring Garden Highway in the wee hours of the morning, a car collided with a minibus and again, we lost four lives and none of the occupants of that car was over the age of 26.
11.25 a.m.

In two accidents we lost eight lives. In that accident on the Spring Garden Highway one of my constituents, Miss Burke, lost a young son who was 23 years of age and in that same accident the Attorney-General's Secretary lost her son. I would like to say that she was very unfortunate in that that was the second time she had lost a child in a vehicular accident. The first child was thrown from the car. Could you imagine what this country has lost?

With the growing number of vehicles on our roads we, in Barbados, should be guided by the experience of other countries. Mr. Deputy Speaker, loss of lives creates pain and suffering in the lives of people. It is a great loss to the country in that it puts pressure on the hospital and the staff of the hospital. It has an economic effect on families. In some cases, it could be the loss of a wife or a husband who is the breadwinner. With that person's loss, income stops coming in and that is a tremendous loss to the family. The person involved in the accident may not die but may be so damaged in the vehicle that their family would have to look for money. If they do not have huge sums of cash to spend on medical bills that would be a drain on that family. Also, as I have said, it adds to the pressure that already exists at the hospital where doctors, nurses and equipment would have to work extra hard. Insurance companies themselves would be under pressure with huge claims and so on which would deplete the money that they would have in the future for their obligations. Then, ultimately, there would be consequential effect on the country as it might lose some of its top brains.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have here an extract from the Police Department as it relates to accidents and fatal accidents. In the year 1992, there were 23 fatal accidents, 1 414 with injuries to persons, none were serious, and 3 207 non-injuries, a total of 4 644 accidents. In 1993 there were 25 fatalities, 1 337 with injuries to persons, 2 981 non-injuries, a total of 4 343 accidents. In 1994 there were 16 fatalities, 1 502 with injuries to persons, 3 239 non-injuries,

a total of 4 757 accidents. In 1995 there were 25 fatalities, 1 499 with injuries to persons, 3 239 non-injuries, a total of 4 763 accidents. In 1996 there were 24 fatalities, 1 853 with injuries to persons, 3 317 non-injuries, a total of 5 194 accidents. In 1997 the fatalities were very high. There were 31 such fatalities, 2 030 with injuries to persons which again is very high, 3 941 non-injuries, very high, a total of 6 002 accidents. In 1998 the fatalities dropped back to 25. There were 35 serious injuries, 2 146 with injuries to persons, 4 315 non-injuries, a total of 6 521 accidents. In 1999, there were 22 fatalities, 23 with serious injuries, 2 252 with injuries to persons, 4 648 non-injuries; a total of 6 945 accidents. Those were the statistics between 1992 and 1999.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a document here which I will make a document of the House. I want to quote from it here as it relates to seat belts and this is from a case of *Froom v. Butcher* in the Caribbean Law of Tort. It says:

"It was established in – this particular case of – *Froom v. Butcher* that a driver or a front seat passenger in a car who failed to wear a seat belt and was injured in an accident was guilty of contributory negligence if his injuries could have been avoided or minimised by the wearing of a seatbelt, even though at that time in the United Kingdom there was no statutory regulation making the wearing of belts compulsory."

In another case;

"*Woods v. Francis*, a motorist in the Cayman Islands was killed in a collision caused solely by the defendant's negligence. The deceased was not wearing a seat belt at the time. *Summerfield C. J.* was of the opinion that it was 'more likely than not that the accident would have killed the deceased even if he had been wearing a seat belt', and it was not therefore a case where the deceased could have been held guilty of contributory negligence. However, he expressed the view that drivers and front seat passengers were under a duty to take reasonable precautions for their own safety by wearing seat belts."

There are some proponents of seat belt legislation who, as I said, support the wearing of seat belts but who are of the belief that the wearing of seat belts in the back of a car is not necessary. I would like to answer that by taking a look at what we term 'the United Kingdom and the United States of America experience of wearing seat belts in the back of a car.'

In the United Kingdom, studies undertaken by the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions and a subsequent seat belt campaign entitled 'Buckle Up In The

Back For Everyone's Sake' resulted in the September 1998 publication of the facts about the wearing of rear seat belts as follows: It is said that in a crash up to 30 miles per hour a backseat passenger without a seat belt is thrown forward with the force of three and a half tonnes. That is based on the weight of an average adult. An unbelted backseat passenger travelling in a car doing 30 miles per hour, when it crashes, will continue travelling into the seat in front at almost 30 miles per hour. Backseat passengers who do not wear their seat belts are likely to suffer chest injuries, broken ribs, broken hips, broken thighs, facial wounds, fractured skulls or abdominal injuries such as ruptured spleen. In fact, when there is an accident there are really three impacts. When the vehicle hits into an object, when the passenger in the car is hit against some part of the car and when the organs of the body hit against the chest and different parts of the body.

The Department estimates that some 40 front seat passengers die each year as a result of back seat passengers not wearing their seat belts. According to calculations, based on the 1991 and 1995 figures, the risk of an adult being killed in the back of a car because seat belts are not being worn is three times greater than for those wearing seat belts. 11.35 a.m.

The Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) survey of April, 1998, revealed that 40% of adult passengers wore seat belts in the backseat of the car compared to 92% of adult passengers in the front. Wearing seat belts has already saved 140 lives per year. TRL estimates that if all rear seat passengers wore their seat belts a further 120 lives could be saved every year.

Compulsory rear seat belts for children under 14 years old was introduced in September, 1989, and for older children and adults in July, 1999. TRL estimates that since the introduction of compulsory front seat belt wearing in 1983, at least 370 lives were saved and 7 000 serious injuries were prevented annually. In the United States of America, the majority of States have introduced legislation which makes it mandatory for rear seat passengers to wear seat belts when travelling.

The research data has shown the inherent danger to unsecured persons travelling in motor vehicles and some States have gone so far to make it mandatory for school buses to be equipped with seat belts for individual seats and for the mandatory wearing of them by school children.

According to the records of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport 60% of licensed motor cars are reconditioned and all of these are equipped with rear seat belts. Of the remaining 40%, new vehicles represent 20% and these are also equipped with rear seat belts. Only 15% of the older cars in Barbados do not have seat belts at all.

Last week, I received a letter from a gentleman living in Rockley, who is the owner of an old Cortina car from the 1960s, and he said he had fitted the front seat of his car with seat belts. Sir, this is a person who knows of the danger of driving in a vehicle without seat belts and is trying to make sure that he is within the ambit of the law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker we at the Ministry of Public Works are of the view that we have to look at an appropriate public relations programme. We were hoping to start serious programming during the rally last weekend but we will be using the Government Information Service (GIS) programme, making use of people like Mr. Gladstone Holder and Mrs. Olga Lopes-Seale to encourage people to use seat belts. We are also looking at the possibility of taking it into the schools where parents and children will be sensitized to the use of seat belts.

It is a massive programme which we will embark on to make sure that this message is carried throughout the country.

We are serious about this programme and will use the media to make sure that the message is carried out as clearly and as often as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will cite from the Bill:

"36B. (1) Every private motor car, contract carriage, self-driven car, hired car, limousine, goods vehicle, hackney carriage, motor cab or taxi driven in Barbados on, or after 1st October, 2001, shall be fitted with a seat belt for

- (a) the driver's seat;
- (b) the front passenger seat; and
- (c) the rear passenger seats.

(2) Every public service vehicle driven in Barbados on, or after, 1st October, 2001, shall be fitted with a seat belt for

- (a) the driver's seat; and
- (a) the front passenger seats.

(3) Every motor omnibus, tour coach and motor tractor shall be fitted with a seat belt for the driver's seat.

36D. (1) Every person travelling in a motor vehicle referred to in 36(B) shall wear a seat belt whilst that motor vehicle is in motion, or the engine of the motor vehicle is turned on.

(2) Every driver and front seat passenger of a public service vehicle shall wear a seat belt whilst the public service vehicle is in motion, or the engine of the vehicle is turned on.

(3) Every driver of a motor omnibus, tour coach or motor tractor shall wear a seat belt whilst that motor omnibus, tour coach or motor tractor is in motion or the engine is turned on.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also saying that all children under the age of four years, travelling in a private motor car, private goods vehicle, hired car or self-driven car be restrained in a safety seat in the back seat of the vehicle.

The seat belt and child safety seat should be of the type approved by the Barbados National Standards Institution.

Sir, I also want to add that if a person is advised by his or her doctor not to wear a seat belt, that person should have a certificate exempting him or her from wearing one and should carry the certificate at all times.

Sir, if you are not wearing the appropriate seat belt and you are caught by the law, there is a penalty for that.

A driver of a motor vehicle who contravenes Section 36F is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction for a first offence to a fine of \$500 and on any subsequent conviction to a fine of \$1 000.

Sir, I also want to say that a seat belt should be worn by one person at a time. Any person who contravenes this is guilty of an offence and is liable on a summary conviction to a fine of \$500 or imprisonment for a term of six months, or both.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that the general public would cooperate with the laws of the country, when they come into being, that seat belts should be worn at all times. I also hope that the police would carry out their duties to make sure that the law is adhered to. The hardest part of wearing seat belts would be enforcement and I believe that it is incumbent on the Police to make sure they carry out these duties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.
11.45 a.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this Bill. I want to say from the outset that I support the idea of wearing seat belts but it would be foolish of me and of the Democratic Labour Party to believe that the wearing of the seat belt is the only thing that would solve the problem of accidents in this country.

Sir, one must recognise that there are many things that can cause or create an accident. The biggest problem that we are facing today in Barbados is the traffic congestion on our roads. One must ask the question: “What would encourage a driver who would not normally exceed the speed limit to do so these days?” Anyone who has to travel on the roads in Barbados would recognise that the biggest problem facing

any Barbadian is the state of congestion on the road. The congestion is not created by the number of vehicles that are imported into the country but the congestion created by the Ministry of Transport and Works (MTW).

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: There is no doubt, Sir, that if we had a previous problem relating to stress in Barbados, the road system is creating more stress for Barbadians. It is regrettable that it is not easy for anyone travelling, especially from the east or the south of Barbados, to attempt to get to Bridgetown without being confronted with the problem of congestion and spending two or more hours on the road; more than they would normally spend on that particular trip.

I think that we must first look at how MTW plans its projects and how they are implemented because they are creating havoc for all Barbadians including the Honourable Minister. It is clear, Sir, that sometimes the Honourable Minister, in order to get to The Pine, where he sometimes finds his office, has to leave Bridgetown and use the ABC Highway. Sometimes he might be leaving this Parliament and must divert onto the ABC Highway to get to The Pine. Sir, one can understand that to get out of Bridgetown, you have to go north in order get back to the south of the island.

Asides.

Sir, MTW has to understand the type of pressure that it is placing on the drivers of this country and the amount of stress that it is creating. It is not good for the productive services of the country. If there is one ministry that one could point at right now that is contributing to the decrease of production in this country, it would be the Ministry of Transport and Works. Every morning when you leave home you are under stress; by the time you reach your job you are of no use to yourself and when you are returning home in the afternoon you are under more stress, and this creates more family problems in this country. This is the same Ministry that is now telling us about the wearing of seat belts.

I welcome the wearing of seat belts. We also have to understand that we cannot come to this Parliament and talk about the number of accidents that occur with people not wearing seat belts, without telling this Parliament the number of accidents that occurred while people were wearing seat belts. The Honourable Minister also has to tell us how some people were trapped in their cars because of seat belts. I am not saying this to prevent the introduction of the wearing of seat belts in this country. However, we cannot behave as though the wearing of seat belts is going to solve all the problems in this country, neither are we going to allow the MTW to believe that because they are creating road havoc at this point in time in this country, that they are going to use

the Seat Belt Legislation to divert the attention of the public from the real problems on the road.

Sir, you only have to question a driver of a Transport Board bus, a minibus or a ZR van to understand the kinds of problems that they encounter in reaching Bridgetown to make a livelihood. You can also ask the Honourable Attorney General about the problems that he encounters on a daily basis.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: What we need in this country is first to sort out our road traffic problems and ease the public from the stress that is being inflicted by the Ministry of Transport and Works and then we can deal with all the other things. We cannot come and put more stress on Barbadians, at this time, without first recognizing that the ministry that wants to paint a beautiful picture is the same ministry that is creating the most problems in this country.

We also have to recognize, as the Honourable Member mentioned statistics, and we are also bragging about how well developed we are, that 60 per cent of our cars are reconditioned cars and that they have seat belts. That is not the important point. If we have 60 per cent of our cars being reconditioned cars, it means, that in less than five years, we will have 60 per cent of our cars to be dumped and there would be a decrease of road space in Barbados because old cars would be parked some way along the highway, unless we find some place to dispose of these vehicles.

Sir, to say that we only have the problem of 15 per cent of the cars not having seat belts, one would have thought that the Honourable Minister would recognize that because only 15 per cent of our cars need to be fitted with seat belts, that he would have said that he had consulted with the Honourable Minister of Finance to make sure that those new seat belts would be installed and they would be duty free and VAT free.

If we are saying that the introduction of seat belts is so important, we should make sure that the least cost of those seat belts is passed on to those people who need to buy them. I am calling on the Honourable Minister to make sure that, when he gets up, he supports the Democratic Labour Party by saying that seat belts should be zero rated and all duties should be taken off them so that those people, who do not have seat belts and who would have purchased cars prior to this Bill, would be able to get those seat belts at a reasonable cost.

I think that is fair. I am asking the Honourable Members of Parliament to tell me whether they feel that I am being unreasonable in making this request. I want to hear, by their voices, if they support this particular suggestion. But we also have to guard against another situation, Sir. Because the Law says that you must have seat belts by 1st October,

2001, it does not mean that that gives anybody the right to increase the prices of the seat belts because they know that there is going to be a demand for them. I want those persons to understand that they also have a responsibility to the public to make sure that this cost is reduced.
11.55 a.m.

At first, the way the Minister introduced this Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2001, I thought that he was introducing it on behalf of the insurance companies, because he was able to break down the losses to the insurance companies, *et cetera*. I admired him – with the statistics produced on behalf of the insurance companies, but what I am interested in, Sir, is the feeling, on behalf of the general public, when we go to the funerals and see the people crying, the impact it has on the families, and that is one reason I would have to support the Bill. In bringing this Bill, we also have to recognize there is another question. Are we also saying that our speed limit is too high? I am not saying that it is, but it is my job to ask questions like these. Or is it that our traffic system is such that it is creating pressure on people to do things they would not normally do?

I would like to hear from the Minister of Public Works and Transport what plans he has, that will be implemented shortly, to make sure that the public of Barbados will not be confronted with the type of pressure which I have previously spoken of. And I am hoping that the Minister will be able to give us some statistics on the number of accidents caused; but he has not given us any statistics to show that a man might have been driving his car, gone off the road, his car turned over and he was trapped in that car and could not jump out, all because of the seat belt. I am not saying that that is the only reason that you should stop wearing a seat belt, but I am also saying that any minister coming to present a case for seat belts must also protect the Government from matters like these.

I also want to know what redress the public of Barbados will have when this legislation is introduced and there is evidence to be found that, because of wearing the seat belt, someone was injured. The same way that you are saying it is the law to have it, you also have to look at what can occur where you encourage someone to wear a seat belt and something happens that should not normally have happened. So you cannot only look at it for yourself, Sir, you also have to look at it in the interest of the passenger and the driver.

This legislation cannot only be the legislation for the Government, it has to be the legislation for everybody and, as you know, Sir, as we drive along the Highways these days, there are a lot of potholes and a man might be driving and hit into a pothole, lose control of his car, and go over an embankment...

My Honourable Friend, who has paved many roads in his constituency, all of a sudden has asked how is it the Government's responsibility?...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I call no names, but I am just sending a signal that I am aware of what is happening...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: ...I do not know who is saying 'bye-bye', or who will 'bye-bye' me, or who will elect whom, but all that I am saying, Sir, is that it is a possibility that these roads might not be found in St. Thomas anymore, but I have to look after the interests of my constituents who have to travel...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Do you have a good depot?

...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Have you finished Welches Terrace ... and many more roads since the last six months.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:...I am watching your progress, Sir, and I am watching the tide...It seems like you are the signal of many things to occur.

As we were discussing the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2001, Sir...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We cannot use the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2001, to test the waters... we would have to use St. Thomas to test the waters.

I am saying, Sir, that we also have to look at it from the passenger's and driver's side, Sir. We have to recognize that this is the heavy hand of Parliament and, since this is the heavy hand of Parliament, I am saying that we cannot only look at what we see as the positive, we also have to recognize that there is a possibility that there might be some negative. We, as 28 people, came to this Parliament to make this particular law, but we also have to recognize that we might make – when it is found that we have made an error – and I think that it is unfair for the public of Barbados to be asked to wear a seat belt and when something occurs and it is proven that the seat belt was the cause ... and we do not put a rider in this Bill to protect the passenger or the driver.

The same way that a passenger who is not using a seat belt can be fined, I feel that whenever evidence is produced to prove that it was as a result of wearing a seat belt that a passenger has been injured, the Ministry of Public Works should have to compensate the passenger and the driver for the damages.

I do not think that this is an unreasonable request and I know that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would understand exactly what it means. And do you know what is amazing about this, Sir? I am aware that because of the bad roads in Barbados, MTW has been having to settle a lot of claims. It is true that they need to respond to some of my constituents who, when they are walking, happen to fall into a pothole and twist their ankles.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You have not settled any lately? I am only saying...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: In other words what you are saying is that people are putting charges against MTW but you are not settling? You are going against the public of Barbados?...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You want to hear something? You turned it into MTW. It used to be Public Works and Transport, but all of a sudden it is not Transport anymore, because the only Transport that you are speaking about is Transport Board. The ZRs and minibuses do not think that they are a part of you anymore. They do not think that you are caring anymore, so I have to call you....

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We also have another scenario and it is that of section 36(d)(1). Actually, I am concerned about section 36 (d)(1)(2) and (3), because here it is saying that if the engine of a vehicle is turned on and you do not have on a seat belt you can be reported and that is something I think that we need to question.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: But you see, it is not only the driver, it is the front seat passenger, too. I am also concerned that you should tell someone who is driving a car that the person in the back seat must be protected by a seat belt, but if you are traveling on the Transport Board buses you are saying that you can travel without a seat belt. After hearing the Minister this morning telling us what can happen with the impact, one would have to ask why is it that we are

only limiting this legislation to certain vehicles and not taking it to include all vehicles like the Transport Board buses, *et cetera*.

Am I to believe, Sir, that if the Transport Board bus is travelling at a particular speed that the same impact will not occur?...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You see, that is the whole problem. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am being asked which country I know ... and that goes back to the point which I am always making in this Parliament; because, Sir, across the world they might not have seat belts in buses, *et cetera*, we are saying, in Barbados, that we cannot do it – as if the same thing that occurs when driving a car, cannot happen when driving a bus.
12.05 p.m.

Am I to believe, then, that this is not what this legislation is saying, that is, the same impact that a passenger in a back seat experiences cannot occur in a bus? Am I to believe, now, that we are going to have some special seats built without steel in the buses so that if there is an accident, the passengers will not go forward and hit the seat in front of them? If I am to believe that, then, I have no problem.

I am saying, Sir, that this legislation cannot only be for cars, *et cetera*. We must understand that we have to speak about all passengers.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We also have to recognise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are requesting that children, under the age of four, be seated in a safety seat in the back. I want to say, Sir, that it sounds good, but you know the kids of today. You can be driving your car, you can have a child in a safety seat in the back of your car and all of a sudden you can find that child at the front of the car.

This legislation is saying, Sir, that if that happens the driver will be prosecuted for it without recognising that even though you have the safety seat in the back and it is attached by the driver, the children of today can slip the safety catches, without removing the actual belts themselves, in such a position that they can get out of those seats. They can now, because of their doings, cause the driver to be charged?

What I am saying, Sir, is that this one should be amended to say that where there is evidence that the child has been deliberately removed from the safety seat, the driver can be prosecuted.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: No, there is no discretion in

this Bill. It says that the driver will be prosecuted and I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that those of us who had to deal with young children would understand that the modern day children can figure out how to solve problems. They can easily remove themselves from safety seats and a policeman, not knowing what has occurred, would tend to want to prosecute the driver and you cannot blame the policeman, Sir, because the policeman would have been doing his job according to this new Act.

This Bill says that the driver will be prosecuted and it did not say 'should be', it says 'will be', Sir. I am saying that these are the types of things that I would like to see some amendment to, and that I would like the Honourable Minister to request of those who helped draft this Bill. I am convinced that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas did not have a hand in drafting this particular Bill.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak just about three minutes on this Bill. I want to begin by saying that I commend the Honourable Minister of Public Works and Transport for having brought this particular measure to Parliament.

Let me say, Sir, that there are many persons in Barbados who, I know, are opposed to the wearing of seat belts. Let us say that, up front, there are people in Barbados who are opposed to wearing seat belts and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they give a lot of reasons for it too. They will tell you that they do not like the feel of it. It has a kind of choking feeling and they feel uncomfortable with the seat belt on, if it comes even close to their chest or close to their necks. Some of them will tell you that it has the effect of crushing their clothes and, indeed, both men and women make the particular excuse that they do not like the seat belt across their chests because it crushes their clothes.

Some of them, as I said, speak of the discomfort in their necks and shoulders when they have the seat belt on. They feel hemmed in, in the vehicle. They feel strapped in and they do not like wearing them. I want to say, Sir, as with any kind of change there is going to be resistance. You are going to get people who will resist the wearing of seat belts.

When we first introduced the measure which said that motor cyclists had to wear helmets, there was resistance to that. Let me tell you something, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you check the files in the Labour Department, you will find even when we went to the mandatory wearing of helmets on work sites, there was resistance to that, and there is going to be continued resistance. Once there is change, people will resist it.

I do not know if the Honourable Member for St. Thomas recalls, but one of the first cases I had to do some research on was a case which involved safety in the workplace. The whole question involved a chap who had been a welder for many years. This chap was given goggles to cover his eyes and he would not put them on because he had been doing the job for years and nothing had happened when he worked without goggles. Even his workmate told him, "Put on the goggles, man. Something is going to happen one of these days."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one day while working, a little piece of the steel came off and went straight in his eye and that was the end of that eye.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Sir, because he was familiar with the job, he decided that nothing was going to happen therefore he did not have to put on goggles. I am saying that the same way that happened, the same way people are going to say, "I am not going to wear that seat belt and nothing is going to happen." Mr. Deputy Speaker, you never know, one of these days, something may very well happen.

We are always saying, Sir, that it is the young people who refuse to obey the law. As I see it, now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reverse is happening. Where the seat belts are concerned I see more resistance coming from the older folks than from the younger ones. The older folks will tell you, "I was driving for 35 years and nothing ever happened to me and I never wore any seat belt yet and I do not see why I should be wearing one now." You are going to get that kind of resistance coming from older people. "I did not have an accident. My car that I bought in 1960 never had a seat belt and I never put one on." You are going to get that kind of position being taken by the older persons.

Sir, on the other hand, the younger folks have demonstrated to me that the seat belt is now part of their driving uniform. I see now that when young people get into a car which is already fitted with a seat belt, they click it on. Believe it or not, a lot of the younger folks tend to be wearing their seat belts now rather than the older fellows. We are going to have to drill it into their heads that they should use this as part of their armoury. As I said, the younger fellows are more likely to comply.

My advice to the older chaps who are so very set in their ways, now, is that a little discomfort, and in some cases, a little expense, is a small price to pay for your safety. And that is something that we have to preach to the older person nowadays.

12.15 p.m.

To my mind it is more likely for them at that age to be getting into accidents and having to do things suddenly. I do not recall exactly what age it is that they have to go and get their eyes tested before they can get the licence renewed nowadays. I think that that age group is more likely to need seat belts nowadays than anybody else because we have to let them know that the volume of traffic on these roads has really increased tremendously over the last 10 years. Whereas, when they started to drive perhaps there was not such a great volume of traffic on the road, but it is there now. I would also want to let them know that people seem to be taking a bit more risk on the road nowadays than was the case when they started driving.

I do not agree with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy on many things but what he said is true, that there is, indeed, more road rage today than there was last year and the year before.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I am saying, as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has said, that some of it has perhaps come from the whole question of frustration on the road and from the digging up of the roads, and so on, because all of these things tend to cause road rage. What I would say is that that is the price of progress and we have to pay for it in some form. We are not digging up the roads to make them worse, we are digging them up to make things better. When you are going to work you drive for hours and you go nowhere, and that is a fact. Because the traffic is blocked up and so forth, the road rage is there and people take risks and they are more prone to get into accidents in that kind of situation. So, any level of protection we can give to people is quite acceptable. We need it and they are protected, in my opinion, once they wear the seat belt.

The statistics quoted by the Minister would tend to suggest that there are, indeed, too many road deaths on our roads. A percentage of that could very well be caused by the lack of seat belt use so we have to impress upon people that when they wear the seat belt they are not only doing so for their own benefit. Therefore, I would ask a lot of them to think of what would happen if they get into an accident and leave grieving relatives behind. I think that is something that we also have to tell them. We are protecting them from themselves and we are also protecting them and their relatives as well when they wear it. It is not just the individual that we are thinking about. There are others who are involved as well.

I listen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to Mr. Seibert Johnson as he calls in with the traffic on mornings and I can tell you that one of the things that he always tells people is about their having children standing in the front seat. This seems to be

something which is happening far too often in Barbados with these young ones standing between the seats, and so forth. There is something else I have heard him commenting on and that is the question of having..., he actually saw it, a little girl or a little boy, I do not remember which it was, in the driver's lap as though the little child were driving the car. Those things are clearly stupid things to be doing.

When I was in Miami recently, there was a case there where a mother was driving along the road – and obviously on those roads you drive at 80 kilometres per hour and so on – that is the way you drive and that is almost an acceptable speed – and the child was thrown through the windshield because the child was standing. There was no belt and the child died. The point I want to make is the mother was charged with involuntary manslaughter and was found guilty; but I had to say that if I had anything to do with the charging or the prosecuting of the person, I would not have brought any case for involuntary manslaughter. I would have brought a case of genuine, pure, unadulterated manslaughter because I believe that that was recklessness. Not only that, it means that you have got to have some kind of *Mens Rea* when you are driving with your child there, unprotected like that. You should know that if, for the slightest reason, you have to apply brakes, then that child is going to be at risk; and that is exactly what happened. What happened, though, in that case was that the mother was not fined, convicted and imprisoned. In fact, she got nothing of the sort because, eventually, what they said was that she had gone through so much grief, and so on, having lost a child already that they were not going to enforce it; but they brought the case to show others how serious they were in that regard and that they were not just going to ignore it. So I want to tell the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who was trying to cite instances when a seat belt can, perhaps, cause a death that there is more to be said for than against the wearing of seat belts. We have to remember that ...

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Now, the Americans – and remember I said I was only going to speak for three minutes, but I believe that I have gone on for about five minutes now – and the Japanese, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have carried out numerous studies on this question of seat belts. They have put a lot of research and a lot of money into it. They have had people – and you have seen some of them, I am sure – crashing cars against walls on the television and so on, with dummies in the cars trying to show you exactly what effect things like the air-bags and the seat belts can have.

The whole world is going that way and I believe that all Barbados is doing now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is falling in line with what is happening worldwide. I do not think that we are doing anything which is strange or different. The whole question of wearing seat belts in buses and so on is

something which I do not think is done in other parts of the world. Perhaps we can go along with that until the time comes when we think it is necessary for us to do that. They have done research and the research has begun with cars and they have realised that, as I said, there is more for the wearing of seat belts than against.

If you go overseas, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have no choice but to wear them. There are people who would resist it here but will go overseas and be the first to buckle up. I know a fellow, from my area, who told me once that he would never, ever cut canes. I was a boy around eight or 10 years old then, and I remember it clearly; but by the time I got 12 years old he was going to the United States of America to cut canes. He did not cut one here and this is the same thing with the seat belts. Some people will say that they are not going to wear seat belts here but when they get overseas they will buckle up, cool so, and think absolutely nothing about it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government would have to be tough on this piece of legislation and will have to decide that it is going to be rigorously enforced because it is no use having it there and not really and truly enforcing it. We have certain bits of legislation which, the entire country will tell you, we do not enforce enough. The whole question of littering by throwing things out of buses, and so on. People get away with that almost daily.

I would hope, when it comes to actually enforcing this legislation, that we will see it as an absolute necessity because in enforcing it I do believe that we would be protecting a lot of people from themselves.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to give my support to the comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the Deputy Leader and Shadow Minister responsible for this area, because I believe that he set out, very clearly, some of the concerns that the public would have about this Bill that should galvanize the Minister not to get himself into another public relations rocket which will carry him, not to the moon, but over it. He should sit down instead and reflect on some of the comments that have been made.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, not the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. He and I, in recent times, have had a very good understanding, such that I am waiting on him.

I agree with what he said but what I am saying is that the Minister needs to understand that the statistics which

were produced in here are being produced all over the world and even scientists, police investigators and all of those other people are still questioning the validity of the statistics on seat belts.

12.25 p.m.

Sir, my own view, based on the statistics presented to me, is that it is preferable to have seat belt legislation in place. We support it but statistics alone are not going to solve the problem because each accident has to be taken on its own merit.

Sir, there are different kinds of seat belts and we know there are situations where you wear a seat belt and it fails; and the combination of seat belt and air-bag has created problems where people, particularly young children, have been trapped and the seat belts have ended up causing death in some instances. Sir, on the preponderance of evidence available, I believe it is important to introduce seat belts in Barbados.

There is a second element that I would like the Minister to consider. In Barbados, the design of some of the vehicles that we have on the road needs to be reflected on. People market vehicles and market them on the basis of how they can be used in other countries and believe they are feasible in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a long time ago I had a Suzuki van but I never felt comfortable sitting in that van because I like something between myself and the vehicles coming towards me. That is why I like jeeps.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It is a personal preference but every accident I see that involves a Suzuki van, or one of those types of vehicles, in Barbados, convinces me that they are not the kinds of vehicles that certain people should be operating and that children should not be allowed in them. I believe that we need to look at the roads in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have allowed those massive sixteen-wheeler trucks on our roads. This morning I saw one at the Windsor junction that was taller than a double decker bus. In front of me was a truck carrying drinks; behind me was a trailer, and many things flashed in my mind. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are charged with the responsibility of making laws and regulations that permit certain kinds of vehicles on the road. As long as we are going to allow those kinds of vehicles on roads that can barely accommodate two large eighteen-wheeler trucks, it means that we are not protecting the citizens of this country.

The Minister, beyond seat belts, has to look at the kinds of vehicles allowed on the road in Barbados even if it makes him unpopular with some of the construction

companies and business people who may have influence in this country. The Minister needs to bite the bullet on this issue and decide that there are some kinds of vehicles that he is going to allow and some kinds he is not going to allow.

Likewise, the importance of the smaller vehicles. There are some countries in the world where those small vehicles are not allowed on highways because, if an eighteen-wheeler truck passes them, the wind alone from that eighteen-wheeler truck can turn them over, so they have been banned from driving on some of their larger highways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a precedent in Commonwealth countries for introducing legislation in which the design of the vehicle is very carefully looked at and importers can even be banned from importing certain kinds of vehicles for safety reasons. I urge the Minister to look at that because overall the question of traffic in Barbados is a development issue as traffic in this country has increased tenfold. It has not reached the stage where people jump out of vehicles and engage in fights, but we are seeing more and more traffic congestion, particularly when you go to collect school children in the afternoon, after work and first thing in the morning. We have to find mechanisms for dealing with this. Some can come from expanding the highways, but some will not be solved that way.

Therefore, the Minister has to look at the importation of vehicles and all of those other issues relative to the environment in Barbados, including the stress that the number of vehicles creates in our country. We believe that this is going to be one of the major development constraints of Government in the future.

I believe a driving code was approved by Parliament in Barbados and the Attorney General promised us that a public relations programme would follow the introduction of the driving code. There are people who genuinely do not know or are ignorant of the driving code and driving etiquette or who are just ignorant, period. Their indifference, as a result can create problems.

12.35 p.m.

There are people who stop at school-time, on Culloden Road to collect children. They do not run into the school to collect the children and come back out, but they stop and wait until the school ends and cause a back-up of traffic on the road. There are delivery men working in this country delivering goods, and so on – as politicians we do not talk about these things because we feel that they would get vexed and will not vote for us because we complain. There is a growing culture, in Barbados of indifference to some of those basic sensible things that citizens should do. Therefore, people act as though nobody can tell them anything.

The Ministry of Transport and Works has a big responsibility. Two weeks ago, I was going up Station Hill about 7 o'clock...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There was a gentleman directing traffic. He was not a policeman, a traffic warden nor an official. He had a red flag in his hand. He tried to stop a vehicle and the driver decided that he was not stopping, which he is entitled to do because the man who instructed him to stop was not a policeman nor a traffic warden. There is no law that says that he must stop. He refused to stop and the man verbally abused him, poisonously, there in Station Hill. He was jumping up and down creating an unholy mess.

He, then, allowed the traffic to come down on the other side, and I was the first in the line and he started to call me. He found that I was moving off too slowly, so he started, again to get on badly.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, he abused me until I got out of sight.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am saying that MTW has allowed that kind of thing to happen where anybody in Barbados, regardless of their training or understanding of traffic, can stand up with a red flag in their hand and stop traffic with any kind of signal that they want. When an accident happens, the question has to arise whether MTW should be liable for not ensuring that somebody trained in the regulation of traffic is deployed, and whether the person who operates the construction company should be required to ensure that the appropriately trained persons are deployed.

There is a whole set of traffic wardens and island constables who could be drawn upon to go and regulate traffic. It seems as though construction companies put people who are not even fit to engage in manual labour to direct traffic. Their attitude towards motorists is simply disgusting. The construction companies, at the end of the day, are the ones that have created the inconvenience. Therefore, they should not function in that way. That is another issue that you have to look at because it has caused a lot of accidents or complete back-up of traffic on some of our major highways in Barbados.

The Ministry of Public Works itself, to my mind, is not carrying out its own analysis and intelligence of the danger spots in Barbados, relative to roads. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North can tell you about the junction where the two young men died the other day at the Brereton/Edgecombe junction. There must be, at least, five

Barbadians, in my lifetime, who have died at that junction. The road was widened, but because of the way that the side roads seem to be concealed, people come up that road at a tremendous speed and all of a sudden they find a car in front of them.

Four Roads, St. John, is another area in which almost every Saturday morning there is an accident. People come through Four Roads from Lemon Arbor or Pool, then those who are entering that area by the fire station or the gas station get into accidents. I believe two people have already died at Four Roads as a result of those kinds of accidents. It should not be difficult for the Ministry of Public Works to put signage and also carry out an analysis of some of those very dangerous junctions in Barbados and deal with some of the problems that are posed in those areas.

Sometimes, you tell people that an accident took place in St. Philip, and without more detail they can rattle off the places where it is likely that the accident took place. If you are familiar with driving on those roads, you would know the areas. Likewise, in St. John and some parts of Black Rock, St. Michael, there are recurrences of very dangerous accidents. Therefore, I suggest to the Ministry of Public Works that they analyse the police statistics and the investigation reports to see the dangerous spots on our roads in Barbados and do everything in their power to ensure the avoidance of accidents by providing adequate signage. There should be information telling people how to use those junctions and/or the mirrors, and instructions on interpreting the signs that are put on the roads.

Despite the Highway Code, there are many signs on roads in Barbados of which people do not know the meaning. Again, the Ministry of Public Works has a responsibility to carry out a public relations programme to try to reduce the impact of the stress that Barbadians face on the roads and, thus, to ensure that we can all feel safe.

With those few words, I want to reiterate that we do not oppose the introduction of the seat belts. In fact, I believe that, at the end of the day, it is going to have a positive impact on Barbadians. I recommend the wearing of seat belts to all citizens who are using our roads, particularly drivers of motor vehicles and other kinds of vehicles where seat belts are provided. Also, in particular, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip North said, to ensure that heavy penalties apply to persons who are not adequately restraining children in motor vehicles because this is one of the areas of major concern. One should still not, at the end of the day, assume that the mere provision of seat belts is going to have a dramatic impact in relation to accidents in Barbados.

Thank you.

Mr. D. T. GILL: Sir, I too lend my support to this legislation. I would hasten to add, just as the last speaker concluded, that it must not be seen, the wearing of seat belts, to be a panacea for all injuries received as a result of accidents. Neither should the wearers of seat belts be lulled into a false sense of comfort that – “now I can even speed a little more because I will be wearing my seat belt and the other person coming from the other direction would also be wearing their seat belt”.

Recently, I think that it was in Britain, after a collision, they found that both persons in each of the vehicles were themselves strapped up, to use the jargon, and the ones who were strapped up were the ones who died. This is how the cookie crumbles. It was shown, Sir, that there were internal lacerations, spleen damage and asphyxia, again, this is part of the price you have to pay.

Where we are finding most of our problems, I would say, is in the uncouthness of drivers not obeying basic traffic signs. A few weeks ago, sheer mayhem broke out between the Welches and Quakers Road, near Tweedside Road, as the excavation started for the road widening and the safety rehabilitation. It has been alleged that the contractors put in their own signs without the permission – I would hope, Sir, that this does not happen again – of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. So that you have a contractor who thought that he should make one-third of a road a minor road by virtually locating stops where, previously, there were none and the other two-thirds should continue as before. And that he will take roads which are minor roads and join them together and call it a major road. And Sir, from as early as 6.30 in the morning, on the first day, there were accidents occurring. So I would hope that this does not occur again wherever the road works happen to be; that that would be the last, and that the Ministry of Public Works and Transport makes it quite clear to the contractor that the adjusting of road signs is not his business. His business is to excavate, lay and restructure, but not to dabble with the actual road signs.

12.45 p.m.

Sir, each day I come to Parliament, I see persons, whether they be pedestrians or drivers, disobeying the traffic lights by the Wilson Junction. In my opinion, you can now take those lights down. They serve no purpose because people are just walking across them as they like; others get off bicycles and walk, and Sir, some of them just drive through. This kind of behaviour is getting more and more popular.

I tend to agree with the Leader of the Opposition about the size of those vehicles. Some weeks ago, while coming across Pine North/South Road, from by the descent by the old agricultural building, I was able to see one of those huge container trucks coming towards the Junction to Pine Plantation Road, going onto Government Hill. I saw that

container truck appear and disappear in no time, which gave me an idea of the speed at which it was travelling towards me. I know that the width of that type of vehicle can be so great that the road would have had a little difficulty in accommodating both of us, so I turned into the Ervin Wilson School and let the driver take up the entire road himself.

The other thing which is of great concern is not merely the size of the vehicle, but what the vehicle is transporting. Sir, I am of the opinion that flammable and noxious fluids or gases should not be transported at certain times of the day. We cannot just follow the developed countries, in one area, and then turn a blind eye to the other areas. That Highway is used to shuttle everything from one Port to the other and it is also a link for all heavy, industrial vehicles.

The other thing which I noticed a few nights ago was a fellow – and this is getting very popular – driving a big DC truck, bucket fully hoisted, and he was speeding. Again, this shows disrespect not only for the law but also for the other road users. One may assume that because “big” means powerful, anything smaller than this vehicle would have to abide by the consequences.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, we should not see this legislation as reversing the number of serious injuries or fatalities overnight. We should not see it as a comfort zone in which to rev up a little more, and we should not see it as a source of reducing personal damages. I must hastily add that once this legislation has been passed and the assent has been given, rigorous following up by the Police should be carried out to make sure that it is not a matter of personal decision.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I add my contribution to the Debate. I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 2.00 p.m.

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

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

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I want to thank all those Honourable Members who have taken part and made valuable contributions to this Bill before the House.

I would like to say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and soon to be Leader, that I do not know of any statistics which will show the number of people who have been trapped in seat belts. He asked that in his contribution. I also want to say to him that we have well over eighty thousand vehicles on the roads in Barbados today and since we came into power in 1994, there have been great increases of about thirty-five to forty thousand vehicles on the roads. The reason for this is the success of the people of Barbados.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order because the Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is giving the House the impression, Sir, that since the Barbados Labour Party took over the Government the total number of vehicles has increased by one hundred percent. I think, Sir, that the Honourable Member would have to bring the statistics to prove that point.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I said, Sir, that it is a result of the success Barbadians are experiencing due to the Barbados Labour Party's administration.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I do not produce these Crime and Justice Bulletins, and there are two more coming, for fun. In the Crime and Justice Bulletin Number One, Sir, on page 7, and I quote:

"In 1984 there were 42,157 registered motor vehicles in Barbados. In 1994 there were 52,215 and at 1999 there were 72,805 of which 57,513 were private cars."

So that in the 10-year period, 1984 to 1994, they rose by 10 058. Between the five-year period, 1994 to 1999 they rose by 20 590. I do not have the figures for year 2000 to 2001.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: As I said, Sir, there has been an increase from over 50 000 to over 80 000 vehicles on the roads in Barbados today. This is a result of the Barbados Labour Party bringing some kind of respectability to the country whereby making the people proud. They are working, making money, and they are in a position to buy a car and sometimes two cars.

Sir, that is why I am not in support of banning the importation of motor cars. In the past, people who had motor cars during their time, when they could not afford a motor car, they did not afford a motor car and they were not

speaking about the banning of motor cars. And now, some of them are talking about not allowing the cars into Barbados. I do believe that we have to think of other ways of looking at the traffic situation in Barbados. As I said, I am not one for banning the importation of cars. Car ownership is a part of the success experienced in this country thanks to the Barbados Labour Party.

I also thank the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. John, when he spoke about the size of vehicles on the roads. I am concerned, at times, about the large eighteen wheelers. When they pass on the Highway, as you said, sometimes the wind from them can knock cars off the roads. I believe that we should be looking at the size of vehicles that we are importing into Barbados.

We spoke, too, about those people who work with the construction companies directing traffic on the roads. Sometimes, yes, I regret that they are not police officers. I also believe that instructions should only be taken from a uniformed policeman. The contractors should speak to the Ministry about getting a police officer to direct traffic, when they are working on the roads in Barbados.

At this point, I would also like to reiterate that a serious training programme, PR programme and enforcement of the traffic laws, would be very important. I would also add to this debate that there will be other pieces of legislation coming, where the traffic amendment is concerned. Very soon, I will be looking at making it mandatory for drivers in Barbados to travel with their insurance certificate for the motor vehicle, as well with their drivers licences.

Sir, quite often the police in Barbados are given wrong names. If a person driving a car is stopped by the police, that person could easily give a wrong name and say, "I am going to produce my licence at such and such a station". Then, they can send their brother, sister, uncle or somebody, to take in their licence and say he or she had been driving the car, because the policeman who reported the person would not be at that particular station when the licence is produced. So, we have some problems where other people are going to carry in their licences and say that they were the persons driving.

As I said, the matter of drivers licences and insurance certificates is a piece of legislation that will come to the House very soon when we amend the traffic laws, whereby ensuring that you should drive with your insurance certificates and drivers licences at all times.

With those few remarks, I ask that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS the House resolved into Committee on this Bill, Mr. D. Carter in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, 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. R. D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2001.
2.15 p.m.

ORDER NO. 4

THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND BILL, 2001

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to introduce this Bill to the Honourable House by, first of all, putting this Bill into its proper context. When I say "putting it into proper context", Mr. Deputy Speaker, I mean putting it against the background of an assessment of the importance of the agricultural sector in the economic development process and, secondly, against the background of the specific reasons why a Bill of this type is important at this juncture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, our dear Prime Minister, has been preaching the virtues of our seeking to reposition the Barbadian economy as a result of developments in the regional, hemispheric and international arenas. He is, constantly, reminding us of the need for us to create a new economy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is constantly reminding us that it cannot be business as usual, especially in the productive sectors, and that the old outdated ways of doing business in these sectors would have to be a thing of the past. Updated technologies and methods of operation would have to be introduced in order for us to maintain the type of momentum in the economy that we have been able to gather in the last seven, or so, years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the agricultural sector is no different, in this regard. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have grown accustomed to assessing the contribution of the agricultural sector by using a very narrow focus, and when one continues to do that, one is likely to conclude that the agriculture sector's relative contribution to the economy might be treated, that might be the case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we were to look at the structural transformation process in the Barbadian economy, and seek to measure sectoral performance in relation to the overall gross domestic output, then we might be tempted to conclude that over the last 30 or 40 years, certainly – the structural transformation process would lead us to conclude that – the agricultural sector has declined, significantly, in terms of the actual performance and relative importance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in more recent times there has been a loud call for a holistic view of the importance of the agricultural sector to be adopted when one is assessing sectoral performance. I am going to be fairly brief at this juncture and, for the benefit of this House, I am going to list the possible benefits of the agricultural sector which would put us in a better position to explain its full value to the national economy and society.

For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, food and nutrition security and stability at the local and the international levels. If we accept that an overriding objective of promoting activity in the agricultural sector is food security then within that context the more food we produce in a highly open economy the more we will save in foreign exchange. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is very important because the figures for importation to satisfy the consumption needs are of the order of 73 to 74 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the agricultural sector also helps us with income generation for rural and urban sectors through production and distribution of commodities. Of course, it provides employment and if there is promotion of agriculture for export it helps to generate foreign exchange to pay for consumer items, food, and debt servicing.

Another benefit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in the area of assets creation in terms of improvements on land, livestock, infrastructure and productive resources that gradually appreciate over the longer term. Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, inputs and materials for other sectors. Here we can make contact with the important sectoral linkages between industry, manufacturing and tourism.

Another benefit arises in the area of natural resource management and regeneration, as well as in environmental services, for example, energy and synthetics, water resources and mitigation of vulnerability. Another important benefit

can be felt in the area of rural development where we are focussing on investment in the infrastructure, roads, *et cetera*.

This benefit would be pleasing to the Attorney General. It helps with the rural/urban stability where the focus is on the reduction of social problems. If we do not make effective use of the land that is available in the rural areas, there will obviously be a movement of the population away from the rural areas to the urban areas, thus creating overcrowding and the attendant social problems, for example, unemployment, drug addiction and crime.

Another benefit is the provision of manual and skilled labour for the other sectors. We could even include here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the business opportunities that are provided for multilateral and bilateral financial agencies, for example, financial institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank. It also provides good lending opportunities for indigenous financial institutions like commercial banks, credit unions and informal lenders.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that if we were to take a more holistic view of the agriculture sector we are likely to appreciate why it is necessary that it be supported, and the importance of bringing to this Honourable House pieces of legislation like the Agricultural Development Fund Bill, 2000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members will recall the Prime Minister, during the 1999 Budgetary Proposals, saying that he will make available resources to the Agricultural Development Trust to subsidise the sector and provide concessional financing and funding for technical assistance to the farming community.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development certainly endorsed the concept of this Agricultural Development Trust as a vehicle to channel financing into selected projects and programmes aimed at development, particularly with respect to crops and commodities in which we have some sort of advantage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I alluded earlier to the need for us to seek to reposition this economy and to recapitalise the strategic sectors of the economy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is absolutely necessary because as a small open developing economy, one which is called upon to operate in a fiercely competitive regional and international economic environment characterized by an increasing pace of economic liberalisation and the resulting new competitive environment, sectors like the agriculture sector and other strategic sectors

of the Barbados economy will face serious challenges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the international events which has implications for the performance of the productive sectors is the multilateral trade negotiations. The main point in focus in these negotiations relates to market access, export competition, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and trade concerns. The way in which and the pace at which these negotiations are proceeding will result in the continuous erosion and reduction of the level of tariffs and domestic supports that could be given.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can also focus on the hemispheric free trade area and the negotiations with the FDA initiatives. These negotiations will ensure the commencement of this free trade area in the year 2005.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the agreement to the ACP/EU LOME IV Convention emerged during the first quarter of 2000 and this agreement is particularly instructive from two perspectives. Trade instruments which are available under the ACP/EU Agreement will have to become more and more consistent with WTO rules. The particular Protocol which will be of benefit to us would be the Sugar Protocol from which we have benefited quite handsomely over the years. Other commodities which we export significantly to the European Union would be rum and, for other countries in the region, rice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also an element of reciprocity built into the partnership agreement namely, that the goods of EU origin will face improved market access conditions when entering ACP countries. This would lead to a further increase of the competition on the domestic market.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here at home we have to consider the pace at which discussions are taking place to facilitate the establishment of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have said all of that to put into proper context the importance of the Agricultural Development Fund Bill, 2000. Basically, what we are trying to do is provide a fund which will facilitate the repositioning and retooling of the agriculture sector as the farming community faces increasing competition at the regional and global levels as a result of liberalisation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this has to be understood because I do not want the impression conveyed that the Government is just providing a sum of money for the 'marish and parish' in the agriculture sector to proceed with activities in ways which would not redound to the benefit of the sector as we try to deal with the competition which is being provided.

In summary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are saying that the Agricultural Development Trust is expected to combat the negative defects of trade liberalisation and it is expected to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of the various components of the agriculture sector to deal with increasing competition from non-CARICOM, as well as, CARICOM sources.

2.35 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the next thing that I am going to say relates to the type of activities that we, at the Ministry of Agriculture, think would be those strategic ones that we should focus on via the Agricultural Development Fund. It is all about advancing activities in the sector by focussing on those commodities which we think Barbados should concentrate on, at this point in time, and certainly in the future.

The Honourable Member for St. Joseph comes to full light at this point.

Asides.

Hon. Mr. A. P. WOOD: The first one you would appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the use of some of these funds to help us with the significant planning that has to take place for us to develop an integrated cotton industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, opportunities abound in this area and we have to plan carefully for the development of the cotton industry. I am not going to recap those factors which would have contributed, in no small measure, to be seen in the cotton industry. What I can say, nevertheless, is that through the efforts of this Government, and I must applaud the work of the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Attorney General, we were able to deal with an issue which served as an albatross around our necks, namely, the trademark issue to the problems which we experienced earlier.

Sir, I established, at the Ministry last year, a task force on cotton with a very wide mandate. I asked the task force members to fully investigate the cotton industry of Barbados with a view to providing a comprehensive development plan which focuses on an integrated cotton industry.

We, in the region, have the benefit of producing a premium product from our West Indian Sea Island Cotton. For too long, other residents elsewhere could be benefitting handsomely from our production of cotton. We sell the lint and they take it through the other stages, and the fabric and other garments which are produced at the final stage are sold at exorbitant prices. We need to find a way of being creative and establishing an integrated cotton industry which will allow us to stay a little longer in the value-added chain and hence reap more benefits.

Another area of support we would want these funds to facilitate is the development of the Barbados black belly sheep industry. This is an indigenous activity and we need to find a way of moving it forward. Those who are involved in the production of black belly sheep in Barbados may experience some difficulty in moving the industry forward. I think that, as we seek to rationize and streamline activity in the agricultural sector in Barbados, we might need to pay a closer look at this industry so as to put us in a position to take advantage of its potential to earn foreign exchange through the export of the animals as well as to mark the meat as an exotic product.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also need to pay some attention to the development of export crops, as well as the value-added production of these crops which include, for example, hot peppers, sweet potatoes and yams. The focus will be on the development of the horticulture industry, and the harvesting and processing of fish for export. I think that I should mention, at this point in time, that a small group of fishermen – the Honourable Member for Christ Church South will be well aware that some of the long-line fishermen – in Barbados have been able to cut out a niche in the USA market. On a daily basis they have been exporting tuna to the United States but they need help.

They have been very articulate in the representation of their case to the Ministry of Agriculture. I am certain that they have been articulating their case to the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, as well. We understand where the deficiencies are and we will be working very assiduously to help them develop that activity, so that the country can benefit from the foreign exchange from that niche market.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will endeavour to utilize some funds available from the Agricultural Development Fund to help with the strengthening of linkages with the various sectors. At the moment, there is a very important project going on at the Ministry. I am happy to report that the Ministry of Tourism has endorsed our project and we are working closely on an economic linkage project, whereby we are seeking to strengthen the linkage between agriculture and tourism.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, following the removal of the restricted licencing regime on April 1, 2000, the Ministry of Agriculture has been redoubling its efforts. We have been placing greater emphasis on the strengthening of linkages between the agriculture sector and other sectors of the economy. We have had a series of national consultations focussing on the linkages to the hospitality sector. We did one of the linkages with the craft industry; we have had discussion with the Ministry of Education on establishing further linkages with the Ministry of Education and, of

course, particular emphasis is on improving the diet of the school children. Sir, all of these efforts are geared towards facilitating the marketing of locally produced agricultural commodities.

In respect of the economic business project with tourism, we have been making some steady progress in this area. During the last quarter of 2000, the Ministry prepared a project for strengthening the linkages between the two sectors. The first phase of the project involved us ascertaining, in a more comprehensive way, the supply capability of farmers. We wanted to obtain a clear picture of their capacity to supply specified agricultural commodities and in the process of the interviews with a representative number of farmers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were able to identify the precise supply constraints and concerns of the sector.

2.45 p.m.

The second phase of the project, naturally, would focus on demand analysis. We wanted to put ourselves in a better position to determine the demand for agricultural commodities by the agriculture sector and an analysis is being undertaken in very close collaboration with the tourism ministry. A questionnaire has been prepared and is expected to be pre-tested within the next two weeks, after which the Ministry of Agriculture will dispatch interviewers to administer the questionnaires. When we have satisfied ourselves that we have enough information on the capacity to supply to the agricultural commodities and we have information on the demand side, naturally the next phase would be phase three, one of the most critical phases of the project and which will involve a number of partnership meetings between buyers and sellers of these agricultural commodities, with the objectives of developing business contacts and entering arrangements for the purchase and sale of produce. So we want to do it in a very systematic way, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, let me open this aspect of the presentation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am on record, at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and elsewhere, as a matter of fact, as saying that one of the things that we need to do, is to provide national solutions which will allow us to withstand these pressures...

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: And the best way of providing this national solution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is by cooperation at the national level; and the best way we can achieve this is to forge a closer linkage between agriculture and the other sectors.

We have to find ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of searching deep within ourselves to consume more of what is being produced in this country, and it is not restricted to the

consumption of agricultural commodities. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East would, naturally, be preaching to the populace that it is also important to purchase more of what the manufacturers in Barbados are producing.

If we all accept, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that economic development is, indeed, a national enterprise, then Barbadians have a responsibility to demonstrate that at every turn all of us have a responsibility in building this national economy. The best way to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to give producers of the strategic sectors an opportunity to advance; and that is what this economic linkage project is all about...

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I am coming to that. I maintain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that yes, there are myriad problems in the agricultural sector, but I also accept that one of the things that will give agricultural producers a level of confidence would be to allow them to deal with some of the problems and one way would be if there were some "loose" or not "so loose" assurance that what they produced would be consumed in a reasonable time and that it would meet the quality standards, et cetera, of those users of agricultural commodities.

So, we have to get this information on the tastes and preferences of those in the hospitality sector and to make that information available to the producers; and if these producers are given the chance in this arrangement and they want to maintain this type of structured arrangement, then they will have, as a matter of necessity, to deal with some of the supply problems which will allow them to produce the right types of commodities to meet that delivery with timeliness. If there could be consistency in that type of arrangement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over time the tourism industry that is becoming more and more mature will be pulling the agricultural sector along and, at the end of the day, the national interest will be better promoted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me turn to some of the features of this Agricultural Development Fund Bill, 2001.

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I will give you something to talk about, so I will re-emphasize that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things to note with this Agricultural Development Fund Bill, 2001, is the arrangement with the management of the funds. This Agricultural Development Fund, 2001, will be managed by an established institution, the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited. It is an experienced entity, established to encourage

the development of enterprises. So we are not using this opportunity to create another institution. We have an institution that is functioning well, so we are asking the Enterprise Growth Fund to be the Fund Manager. In so doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are sending a clear signal that agricultural production is to be seen as an enterprise and no longer as an exercise in trial and error.

All those persons who want to continue seeking information and accessing valuable institutional finance from the Enterprise Growth Fund will have to see themselves as business persons and operate accordingly. Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Agricultural Development Fund is not to be seen as a fund established to rescue failing enterprises, in a general way. Of course, if we think there is real potential in the type of activity that the business is promoting, then we would want to give it some consideration. Each of the projects put before the management committee, which will review these applications, will receive a full examination in terms of their viability and sustainability and there will be access to their value regarding immediate and future positive impact to the agricultural production.

2.55 p.m.

Full disclosure by applicants, which was a matter of concern to many financiers in the past, must also be a prerequisite for accessing financing under the Agricultural Development Fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the management of this Fund, the Enterprise Growth Fund will be assisted, as I said earlier, by a management committee. This Management Committee will be very carefully chosen and it will comprise representatives from the following agencies:

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development,
The Barbados Agricultural Management Corporation,
The Sea Island Cotton Project,
The Barbados National Union of Fisher Folk Organisations,
The Enterprise Growth Fund and
The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

Each of the Representatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be chosen on the basis of his or her experience in the evaluation of projects and venture proposals. The Management Committee, by its collective wisdom, will screen carefully and recommend on each project put before it.

We can see from the composition of this Management Committee that every effort will be made to include all components of the agricultural sector, and we will be seeking to have key players in the various components of the sector involved at the level of project assessment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another point to note about this

Agricultural Development Fund is its potential to promote rural development. The areas of focus, as the Bill outlined earlier, will be used as a catalyst for the development of rural communities through the encouragement of cooperative groupings of farmers engaged in similar pursuits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we will be seeking to do here is build on what is already established with the Rural Enterprise Fund. The Rural Enterprise Fund is administered by the Rural Development Commission and, unlike the mandate given to the Officers at the Rural Development Commission where the focus of the funds provided there is on agriculture, Rural Enterprise Fund also concentrates on other areas of economic activity.

If one were to look at project profile supported by the Rural Enterprise Fund, one would see a number of different areas of economic activity being supported, either at the point of the establishment of businesses or the facilitation of the expansion of already existing businesses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is informative at this point for me to make mention of another initiative we are taking at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development which can be construed as one of our flagship projects. It relates to the Land for the Landless Project.

I treated this Honourable House during the Estimates Debate, when the Head of the Ministry of Agriculture was discussed at length, to some details of the Land for the Landless Project. What we at the Ministry of Agriculture are noticing is that, notwithstanding what might be said negatively about the interest in agriculture in Barbados, there is a tremendous demand for land in this country for farming activity.

There is also a tremendous demand for land by landless farmers. What we are also seeking to do in this Land for the Landless Project – in which we are basically trying to match the demand for land with the supply of available land – is to appease some environmental problems that currently exist in some areas of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are familiar with the type of concern about which I speak because we have some livestock farmers in Barbados whose operations are not located in the best areas. When I say 'best', I mean in the context of an environment which is conducive to this type of operation.

We have a duty at the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that those operations are relocated before the public health officials heap more pressure on those livestock projects, to the point where these folks have to go out of business.

I cannot stand idly by, as the Minister of Agriculture in this country, and do nothing to facilitate the relocation of

folks like Mr. Hobbes and others. We have another set who are active in the area of the Codrington Agricultural station. A question has been brought to bear on them because of the impact of what they are doing on the quality of water in that area. Minister Mottley has made representation to us and we have to actually internalize these things and act on them because we need to ensure the continuance of these livestock projects.

3.05 p.m.

In the context of the Land for the Landless Project, the land that is available to us, at the moment, in the Scotland District is tailor-made for this type of activity, and we are moving apace to have some of these folks relocated. Interviews have been conducted and, in the very near future, we should be relocating some of these livestock farmers.

This Agricultural Development Fund must be of benefit to some of those farmers who are going to be involved in this Land for the Landless Project. As I said, there is great enthusiasm in the project. We have established a project unit to look after the implementation phase and that unit has been working very assiduously in this regard. It is our anticipation that we will have an official launch of the Project in about two weeks. As part of this structured programme we will not be restricting the activity to the Scotland District but what we would be seeking to do is to give this programme as wide a geographical coverage as possible. How are we going to achieve that? We are going to go outside of the lands which are owned by Government and we have been courting private landlords whose lands are lying idle.

Unlike what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is saying I can assure him that the most recent updated Report, given to me by the new Chief Executive Officer at the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADM), the executing agency, has indicated that in excess of 80 acres of privately owned land will come into this programme. This land has, virtually, been pledged already and we could use two methods to get farmers onto it. Some of the private landlords are agreeing to a direct lease, with the BADMC acting as the facilitator. Others who feel a little more comfortable dealing directly with the BADMC could make the lands available to that agency on terms which are properly thought out and which, obviously, would meet the approval of the landowners. Then, BADMC, in turn, will make the land available to the farmers.

Just let me, for the record, mention some of these areas where land has already been pledged. Towards the end of last week the Honourable Member for St. Michael East contacted me enquiring about the possibility of a group of farmers in his constituency getting an opportunity to engage in farming activity. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has a group of people in his constituency who are very keen on getting involved in farming activity. We have

no fewer than 31 acres pledged in St. Joseph. This land is already occupied by some young farmers, with the emphasis on youth, and we need to applaud the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture because the group's interest in farming grew out of an initiative of the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES).

The management of the Land for the Landless Project has been working closely with the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture with a view to identifying young persons who are interested in farming so that we could make land available to those folks. We also have four acres of land in Husbands, St. James pledged; and 20.4 acres of land in Charnocks, Christ Church. I do not know if the Honourable Member for Christ Church East can identify a couple of farmers. We have 3.25 acres in the Belle, 1.9 acres in Haggatt Hall and 4 acres in St. Philip, among other areas.

We have identified another possible area in the Pine Basin which is contiguous to where Ras Iley does his farming at the moment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have identified no fewer than 87 prospective farmers who are ready and willing to get involved. At the end of the day one of the indicators to measure the success of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will be how many new successful farming projects we are able to bring on stream.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to assure success in this programme we need to go beyond just making land available to people because people need to learn from their mistakes. I was employed elsewhere at the time when the Spring Hall Land Lease Project was conceptualized. We have a model there from which we must learn something and we intend, with this next land settlement programme, not to make those same mistakes. I am not going to rehash those mistakes. Suffice it to say that we are cognizant of the fact that mistakes were made and we do not intend to repeat those, mistakes, otherwise we would not be learning.

Success, in this programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will require more than just access to land or access to funds. The farmers will, certainly, need some training and that training will have to be on an ongoing basis. I am talking about assistance in that area beyond what an extension officer can provide. The farmers themselves would have to be exposed to the best farm management techniques and will have to be educated to the point where they would have to go on the internet and pull down strategic pieces of information. In some cases, they might want to go beyond the point at which the extension officers are, and that is good.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, success in a venture like this, as in any other venture in the agricultural area, will require proper marketing and distribution systems.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier, using a national approach to deal with solutions of this type will help us, after we have made the leap in increasing agriculture production in the country, with increasing the productivity of farmers to help us in realising the ultimate goal of production, for example, the sale of the commodity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this administration has taken a conscious decision to decentralize the distribution and marketing systems for agriculture commodities. I must applaud the Prime Minister for accepting that it is extremely important, and for giving no end of support to this initiative. We have been charged with a responsibility to establish community-based marketing facilities. Three of these facilities will be done by the Rural Development Commission this year and three will be done by the Urban Development Commission this year. The upscale project at the Glebe in St. George will also be done by the Rural Development Commission and we need to begin the project at Oistins before the Honourable Member for Christ Church South demits office. One will also be established at Redman Village, and one in Speightstown. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Glebe in St. George is developing nicely as a town centre and there has been a loud call by the Honourable Member for St. George North for a facility at the Glebe. This is an area where large numbers of people assemble and if we are looking to increase agricultural production and productivity we must afford the farmers greater opportunities for the distribution and marketing of their commodities. In the case of the urban constituencies, I have been reliably informed that markets are planned for the Deacons area, Brittons Hill area and the Bush Hall area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are approaching this business in a holistic manner because, at the end of the day, our business is in the promotion of commercial agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope I have been as clear as I could be in this initiative but I will recap before I bring closure to the presentation.

The introduction of this Agricultural Development Fund Bill should be viewed as another important initiative by this Government. We understand that it is extremely important that this economy maintain its momentum, and this cannot be achieved without the productive sectors moving forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also understand that there must be a transformation in the attitudes of people, that there must be a repositioning, retooling and recapitalizing of the agriculture sector. We also understand that we must streamline, in a better way, activity in the agriculture sector and that funding should be made available to help with the repositioning of the agriculture sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we seek to introduce these flagship projects at the Ministry of Agriculture, it is vitally important that every Barbadian play his or her part in trying to achieve success in these initiatives at the Ministry. We need to view it as a national effort and all of us have the responsibility to ensure that national efforts are successful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those introductory remarks for the Agricultural Development Fund Bill, I beg that this Bill be read a second time.
3.25 p.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: This is the most important Bill to be passed in this Parliament for a long time. The truth is, if it is passed with what I was just given, we could as well close the debate and ask the Honourable Minister to take it back to the Ministry of Agriculture and come back with some new ideas.

The only thing that I would like to agree with him on, Sir, is that we should recognise that there are three sides to this Bill. There are the supply side, the demand side and the marketing aspect of the Bill. Truth is, in this country we do not have a problem with the supply side. The problem is with the demand and marketing sides.

I have said, on many occasions in this Parliament, that we cannot continue to blame the farmers of Barbados for not producing. It is because Government of the day has not created an atmosphere to create the demand, neither have they provided the facilities for proper marketing by the farmers.

Sir, a good example is the dairy industry. We have an over-abundance of milk. Yet, the dairy farmers cannot get the milk sold at a decent price in Barbados. It means, going back to the point which I made earlier, that we have a problem with demand and marketing. I would like the Honourable Minister of Agriculture to tell this Parliament what he has done, since taking over that portfolio, to ease the problems of those farmers which I highlighted.

Earlier in this Parliament, I said that the biggest problem facing farmers has to do with the law as it stands. We, in the year 2001, are still operating with laws that were implemented for slaves, to stop the development of slaves. We are still behaving as though farmers of today are still slaves. We have not recognised that the farmers of today must be the deliverers of Barbados. In order for Barbados to develop, we must not only look from the point of view of earning foreign exchange but we must recognise that we must look at import substitutions.

What do we have, Sir? We have a situation whereby every shopper is allowed to go into the supermarket and buy vegetables from overseas. The persons who produced those vegetables, meats, *et cetera* do not have any hindrances. The

persons importing them can send their order overseas, the goods arrive, they are delivered to the supermarket and the shopper can purchase them.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order. Is the Honourable Member prepared to declare an interest as a supermarket owner or operator, Sir? I hear it being advertised, Sir. St. Elmo Supermarket sponsoring things on Radio 900.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I so declare. I want to say one thing, Sir. Guilty I am not, because the motto of St. Elmo is 'local first'. When I say 'locals', I mean St. Lucy first, then Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I do not even sell foreign soft drinks. I actually find it difficult to get an ice machine because somebody felt that in order for me to get one I would have to sell imported juices and I told them no way. That is a fact, and that is why I cannot get an ice machine. My argument is that once Pine Hill Dairy is producing juices, I cannot sell juices imported from elsewhere. I have a priority to make sure that the people who are working in Barbados are always employed.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am not going to allow the Other Side to use their normal tactics, because they are aware that their argument is weak and they want to divert my attention from the topic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make the point that we have to recognize that the development of Barbados cannot continue to be seen as taking place at the top. It must be seen as being developed from the bottom. Sir, that is why I continue to make the point, in this Parliament, that in order for Barbados to go forward, the Government must be prepared to give the same incentives that they are prepared to give the ones at the top to the ones at the bottom. Sir, that is why a guy who is working on the Land Lease Project in St. Lucy should feel that he should be able to go into his field every day and be able to cultivate this field because he knows that when he reaps his crops there are people there to market the produce.

The system, as it stands, is limited by the number of people who can buy produce to take across Barbados. The person who wants to market that produce for him, must find himself or herself buying a van, on which they had to pay duty, to take the produce across Barbados.

I am saying that has to stop. Sir, any future Democratic Labour Party Government would have to recognise that, if we want to build a solid foundation in Barbados, we not only have to empower the planters but we also have to empower those persons who sell the produce on behalf of the planters. This is the whole problem.

We feel that in this country we can only support people who we believe have money and we must neglect those people who we feel are nobodies, like planters, and that we cannot encourage other people to help each other. If we develop the latter policy where we allow people to grow, we will be making progress in this country. Sir, you are going to tell a man at the Land Lease Project to produce more than 15 000 bags of onions. He cannot sell any to the importers or sell them to the man with the little Suzuki van because the Suzuki van is broken down; and he cannot move across Barbados and there are no incentives in place to ensure that the man can buy a larger van. Sir, even though the onions are being produced in St. Lucy they cannot be taken across Barbados.

Sir, do you know what is also regrettable? We have the best onions in the world. I challenge anybody to tell me that Barbados does not produce the best onions in the world. You do not get that corky substance in the middle of our onions. When you cut our onions, their juice goes into your eyes.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying that it shows the quality of our onions. We, as a people, must start supporting what we have.

Today, Sir, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture came to this Parliament, and he cannot recognise that we have crops that we have to support. Not one incentive has he spoken about in an Agricultural Development Fund to show that he understands what is happening in the agriculture industry.

If this were the sugar industry, we would have heard. The truth is, the Minister did not once mention sugar. He has to understand that in order for us to have an agriculture industry, sugar must also play a part. I thought that the Honourable Member for St. James North would have said to him that you have to link sugar with the whole package. It tells me that they do not understand that the agriculture policy of Barbados, and any future agriculture policy, must also include sugar; but sugar must not be king.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, that is why the Honourable Minister should have used this opportunity to

highlight to Parliament what we are going to do with our factory system and how our factory system is going to help us to improve the other aspects of agriculture. This is very important, Sir.

There are a lot of farmers who are prepared to sell their lands off to real estate agents because they are not sure what is going to happen. I have been making the point that we need to give some commitment to the farmers so that they will know what the future holds for them; but we have not done that, Sir.

If we have a situation where they decide to take the bulldozer and remove the top soil, how are we going to get onion, cotton, black belly lamb and all those things?

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We have to understand that in order for Barbados to develop, we must first learn how to feed ourselves. That is the first thing that we have to learn to do. All of a sudden, it seems to me that the foreign reserve that we have in the Central Bank has gone to our heads and we feel that we can buy everything from overseas. Let me tell you that foreign reserve is matched by borrowings and you must always remember that point.

If we can develop our agriculture industry so that we can get a foreign reserve that is not matched by foreign borrowings, then we truly know that we have foreign reserves. Sir, that is why I am saying that we need not talk about the cotton industry. We need to hear a detailed policy on how we are going to carry forward the cotton industry.

Sir, for too long we have been talking about having the best sea island cotton but yet we have done nothing about it. It is like a man being a great cricketer. He has the best bat but is not scoring runs with it and that is the problem with the Barbados Labour Party. They have a good bat but they cannot score runs with it.

Asides.

3.35 p.m

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is the problem with the BLP. They are telling me that we have the best black belly lamb, but yet they are still exporting the whole thing. So am I to believe, Sir, that we do not appreciate what we have because it is local? We have to change that mentality. And do you know something, Sir? It is not by accident. Look at every new amendment that comes to this Parliament. We are hearing that it was copied from overseas and I have been warning this Parliament that it is about time we recognize our talents, because we have to recognize Sir...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On point of order, the Honourable Member spoke about an amendment, but this is a whole Bill. This has not been copied from anywhere else but Barbados. This is homegrown.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, homegrown, but with a foreign flair.

I am saying, Sir, that we have to recognize that we are part of globalization and there is not much time, and that is why I have said that we need to tell senior people in this country that this is the world of globalization, because they are not behaving that way. They are still behaving as though the world owes them something and is going to wait for them. The truth is, when we are here in Parliament trying to look for ideas, other places are making sure that they capitalize on what we have. No wonder we are hearing about KMarts and PriceSmarts. They realize that we have some foreign exchange here and they want some of it.

I am saying that we, too, have to recognize that we need to tap into somebody's market. The same way that people are tapping into our market, we have to recognize that we need to tap into theirs too. What worries me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we do not have winter, but yet countries that have winter can still sell us vegetables?...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You must learn to listen... Can you answer that question for me Sir? Why, there is winter in North America and they can still sell us vegetables, and sunny Barbados who is supposed to be producing vegetables all year round still has to buy vegetables from overseas?

No, we have to stop and recognize that even though we are small that does not limit us – and by the way, if small is a problem, we need to stop thinking that way. I am small and I dominate this Parliament, and in the same way I can dominate this Parliament you all can dominate the world...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: So take my example and take it to the world. We have to recognize that because we are small does not mean that we cannot do things right... and I know that is why he is not in his seat. He has gone to turn on his tape recorder and when he comes back and gives his winding up speech, he would enlighten this Parliament on what this Government would do to help the agricultural sector. What was said before will not take Barbados anywhere. It will not take it from St. Philip to St. George, because I have not heard anything that will tell me that more

people would start rearing pigs so that the abattoir would stop losing so much money. And, talking about that, in the beginning, I told the Government that when they were going to purchase the abattoir, they were to compulsorily acquire the place. They refused to compulsorily acquire and now, every two months, they come to this Parliament begging for money to give to them. Can you imagine that? The Government has to recognize that the abattoir has to form part of the agricultural policy of the Government and that once you have a properly functioning abattoir, and Bajans believe that it belongs to the Government, they will start keeping pigs again. The truth is that Bajans do not have confidence in the ownership of the abattoir, because the first thing that the Government started to do was to criticize backyard slaughtering. That was an error...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Without realizing that that has been part of the people's lives all along.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Do not talk about speculating.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Why are you telling me that? Tell the people at the abattoir that. Instead of trying to divide and rule, they need to have a proper relationship; and to tell their farmers that instead of keeping two or three pigs they need to increase the amount, so that they might be encouraged to kill two in their backyard and sell eight or more to the speculator. But no, what the Government is saying is that if you have two pigs in your backyard, it wants them for the abattoir – utter foolishness. Why would you want to drive people out of production? What you need now is to encourage people in, and the best way to encourage them is to tell them to keep two pigs, then they will move up. But if you keep telling them that they cannot keep two because you are not going to send them to the abattoir, what is going to happen?

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am serious. We have to be very serious about this and realize that sometimes what you start to believe in might turn out into something negative. That is why I am saying, Sir, that we need to look at the whole marketing aspect of our agriculture and fishing produce and for a simple reason. I have already said in this Parliament that it does not make sense for a fisherman to go fishing and, seeing an abundance of fish, decide that he only wants ten thousand because when he gets to shore he would not have anybody to sell them to. And it happens. But if that fisherman knows that when he gets to shore there are going

to be many duty-free vans to take the fish right across Barbados, then he will catch a whole boat load. What I am saying, is that the only reason that this is not happening is because the Government does not understand the marketing aspect of it. The Government needs to give duty-free vans to the people to market the produce from Six Mens to Christ Church and Christ Church to Six Mens. The truth is that people do not realize that sometimes when people in Christ Church are getting fish the ones at Six Mens are not, but if they had people to shift the catches of fish across Barbados, then you would not get the unnecessary glut that comes about...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, when you were a boy...that is right...but do you know the cost of a van now? And the duty on a van? ... That is the hindrance. I can assure this Parliament, Sir, that the first day any enlightened Government removes the duties on vans to move vegetable and fish produce across Barbados, even civil servants will want to sell. Do you know what is amazing about this whole argument? We look, but we do not learn...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: ... And I will tell you why we do not learn. When we gave those same concessions to the farmers, a lot of people who previously never wanted to put their hands into soil, went out and rented land so that they could get a duty-free van. I am saying that I know of many persons who would like to be able to sell fish and vegetables and what you have to realize is that you can sell the vegetables during the day and the fish during the evening. That is a fact and what it means is that it leaves the farmer to continue tilling the land and to increase the supplies. So you see, when the Minister talked about supply, demand and marketing he has to realize that all three of them are interrelated and you cannot operate one without operating all three...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: See, even better. If you have the duty-free vans now, not only the people in Six Mens and Oistins will be able to get fish, you will be able to take them all across Barbados. That is the marketing strategy, but that is the whole problem with the BLP.

What is also amazing is that whenever you come up with a creative idea on behalf of the masses, you always hear politicians asking if you want to break the treasury, but when you have people flying in with a suitcase full of money, they do not ask that question. They ask how much more do they have to bring and how many more incentives they want to be

given, not realizing that in crunch-time those same persons take their suitcases and go back out of the country. At least, if the concessions were given to the masses they would have to remain.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: He gave the concession at the wrong time.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have to recognize – and I can understand why the BLP will find problems with this proposal coming from me. The problem with them is that they feel all the people should come to one location. They feel that the marketing strategy must occur within the market. That is foolishness. The truth is that when Barbadians go to the supermarkets and see vegetables, meats and the other things, they are going to take them up one time. They are not going to do that and then go to the market, because they are now seeing the supermarket as the market. But what is amazing is that the majority of the meats and vegetables are now being imported, whereas my strategy deals with local produce.

So you have to decide whether you want to continue putting up monuments. Because of your Party's philosophy, you want people to see what you have built and that is important to you; not that it has anything to do with production or increasing the capacity of the people. Once there is something that looks good, that is the important thing, so that you can print a manifesto and say that you have built a market. No, no, it is not the building of the market. It is the building of the people that we are after, and that is why we feel we have to build the farmer.

The next thing the Minister spoke about was the Land Lease Project. I have asked the Minister, on more than one occasion, to solve the particular problems which have occurred at the Land Lease Project at Spring Hall. There are some farmers who have 25 acres of land and cannot work it; who owe the Government and cannot even pay the money; and who do not want to break the lease. I thought the sensible thing to do would be to call them in and explain to them that because of the unpaid debt we are cancelling their lease arrangement, and what we would do is to give them the amount of land that they can manage to cultivate. So the problem is that the land lease has nothing to do with the farmers. It has to do with Government and its policy and they cannot tell anybody that they do not understand what should be done, because on more than one occasion I have told them.

We also have to recognize that it is all right to talk about giving landless farmers land in the St. Andrew area, but Government has to be very careful what the landless farmer is going to do with that land, because as you are

aware – and I hope that you are – the terrain in St. Andrew is not like that in St. Lucy, St. Thomas, St. George, St. Peter, or even St. James. We are speaking about different terrains, and if you do not put the necessary infrastructure in place you might find you have a situation where these people go with good intentions and then end up like the people at the Land Lease Project in St. Lucy, even though they have smaller areas of land.

3.45 p.m.

Sir, ploughing that land, because of the terrain, is going to be a major cost to those farmers and you do not want those farmers starting 'with a negative'. You want to give those farmers hope, and I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will recognize that it is alright to get the information from the Barbados Agricultural Management Corporation – and I want to speak about this now, Sir. The truth is that the Minister does not understand what he has under his command at the Barbados Agricultural Management Company.

The truth is that the company which should be looking after these policies should not be the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation but the Barbados Agricultural Management Company. It is about time that we stop having so many agencies dealing with agriculture in this country and recognize, Sir, that the Barbados Agricultural Management Company was set up for a reason and it should be given the authority to deal with those things that it was set up to do.

If we are going to have a proper agricultural policy we cannot have one agency doing this, the other agency doing that. We must have one body operating in the interest of the country. It is stupidity, Sir, to know the amount of money that has been spent on equipment at the Barbados Agricultural Management Company and that the Government of Barbados has been entering into relationships and committing new equipment into those relationships, when they have a lot of equipment lying idle during the out-of-crop season at the Barbados Agricultural Management Company.

We cannot continue to waste money on equipment, Sir.

We have to utilize the equipment we have and maximise its use, if not, our production cost is always going to be high. I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will understand the point that is being made and recognize that, instead of having the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation and the Barbados Agricultural Management Company operating as two separate entities, he needs to bring them under one Head. Sir, seeing that the Barbados Agricultural Management Company is the one with the most foresight, I think it is the better company to look after the affairs of the agricultural industry.

The Barbados Agricultural Management Company, as the Minister sees it, cannot only be the sugar industry because the name in itself tells you that it is supposed to be an agricultural company and not the sugar industry any more. And that was the beauty of forming that company, namely, to remove the belief that the only thing you can do in Barbados is produce sugar.

I am saying, Sir, that sugar should be here to stay but people must recognize that sugar cannot continue to be king. Things like cotton, black belly lamb, onions and vegetables will have to take the major role in our agriculture industry, but sugar will also play a pivotal role. Sir, once we can get all of these blending together, we can have a proper agriculture industry to take this country forward. Sir, but what we are doing, we are fooling ourselves by setting up an agency here, there and everywhere to make people believe that we are doing a lot; when in truth and fact we are decreasing what we are doing.

Why should we, in this day and age, Sir, given the fact that the Barbados Agricultural Management Company has been able to reduce the agricultural cost in the industry, now look to the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation to continue doing what they have been doing for years, increasing cost, when you have an entity that has reduced cost? Is it because the Barbados Agricultural Management Company was formed by the Democratic Labour Party?

We, in the year 2001, Sir, cannot continue to deal with issues based on which political party is in Government or which political party formed what. We must now look to see what we can do in the interest of Barbados and we must make sure that we have the best agricultural policy for Barbados to compete, not only within the Caribbean, but within the world. This Government will have to tell the future generations of this country why is it that we continue to talk about cotton the way we do, but yet still we have done nothing to propel the progress of cotton in this country.

Why should I be wearing a shirt that I cannot identify with, when you tell me I have the best quality cotton in the world? But I still have to go down town and buy a shirt that I cannot identify with. You want me to be part of my roots, yet you do nothing to encourage me to be part of my roots.

I am saying to the Minister of Agriculture that you are fortunate. You have come at a time when the foreign reserves are high even though the expectations are high too; but the point is that you have leverage and I want to see a company set up in this country once more, Sir, where we can deal with cotton from the primary stage to the tertiary stage.

For example, Sir, take the Arabs. The Arabs recognised that oil was important to them and they made sure they did everything possible to have the capacity to exploit the virtues of oil. Now, they can dictate their place in this world.
3.55 p.m.

So why are we not doing it? We have failed with the sugar industry because for over 300 years we continued to produce sugar the same way we did previously. Are we about to do the same thing with our cotton? We have spent millions of dollars on our educational system. Is it because the Democratic Labour Party brought free secondary education to the country that we cannot exploit our educational system to develop our cotton industry?

We must stop seeing these things along the party line, Sir. We must stop seeing a situation where we think that those people who have money will continue to have money but the masses cannot have any. It is time that these projects come to board and that the masses be empowered by creating the right demand and giving them the right resources to develop the marketing aspect of everything in this country. If we do not do that, Sir, we will be in the same place we are at now, Sir, by continuing to beg people to come and sell, sell, sell. What we need, in this country, is not a mentality of just selling what is imported, but a mentality where we can sell what we produce.

I hope that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development will recognise that his role is even larger than that of the Minister of Tourism, and I hope that his statistics are statistics which will increase the growth of Barbados and will not create the same problems that the statistics from tourism are creating for the Minister of Finance.

So you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whereas the Barbados Labour Party is about building markets, the Democratic Labour Party is about getting the produce directly into the hands of people more easily. This ties in with what is going on in the rest of the world because, in the world today, one does not have to leave one's home to access a product anymore.

The Barbados Labour Party is telling us that the world is moving in one direction but they want us to continue doing business the way it has been done for many years. In other words, that you have to leave your house and go somewhere to a market. No, that is not so. We also have to recognize that if a proper market strategy is put in place then the farmer can have the marketers set up the sale of produce on the internet and the householders can tap in to the internet to get the produce. We have to move with modern technology, Sir, and we have to utilize it from the bottom up. The whole problem with this Government is that they believe that everything must be top down. This Barbados Labour Party

recognize that if they cannot deliver the goods then they must put the necessary policies in place and make sure that these policies are implemented so that the masses can get their fair share in this country.

Not only that. I also want you to know, Sir, that if a farmer knows that there are enough vehicles to take his produce out every day that he can reap the required amount to sell to the people who would want to sell his produce, then he would not necessarily have to put himself into expense by buying expensive cold storage equipment, depending on what crop he is dealing with. Because the policy will be such that every day he knows every day there will be people taking fresh produce to the public.

Do you know what we can do, Sir? We can have a policy in place like 'Buy local fresh produce. Do not buy the imported cold storage produce' and we can have a good marketing strategy; but what we are having is the reverse. If you go to the Spring Hall Land Lease Project today, Sir, you will find that even though there is a scarcity of tomatoes you will still find some farmers who have to dump tomatoes, and that is a fact. What we need is a policy in place so that that farmer would know that even though he has one field coming he can have another one coming and another one coming and he can put a proper management strategy in place.

Every time we hear Ministers speak we hear about this proper management policy that the farmers must put in place. There is nothing wrong with asking them to put proper management policies in place but they must also get the incentives to encourage them to put those proper management policies in place. In this country, we feel that we must always look over our shoulders to see who is getting close to us. We must stop that because there is nothing wrong with our neighbours bettering us. We feel that we should keep down our neighbours and not encourage them to get close to us; that there must always be distance between us. That is foolishness. So who are we hurting? We are only hurting ourselves, as Barbadians, when we continue to develop these selfish attitudes. The worst culprits in this are politicians who feel that if they continue that particular policy that people must always come and beg them for handouts to help them, and they feel that they will continue to get a vote from those persons because they have developed the dependency syndrome. NO! We are in globalization now and that type of politics cannot continue to work.

If we do not have foreign exchange, we cannot develop Barbados and we will not be able to continue to offer the services that we have been offering. That is why during the Estimates debate I made this point and I do not think that anybody understood it. It is no longer the role of the planter

or the manufacturer to look for markets. It is the role of Government because, the truth is, when all the foreign exchange is gone, it is the Government that has to look for the foreign exchange. The planter or the manufacturer might have made his profit and does not have to care whether he sold his produce on the local market or on the foreign market. It is the role of Government to find the foreign exchange.

The Ministers must understand that their role is to create the foreign exchange and the foreign reserves of the country, and it is for them to recognize a good product. I hope that the Minister of Industry and International Business is listening because it is not the role of the guy who is making a good mauby, a good pepper sauce or good seasoning to sell it overseas. It is the Minister's role to make sure that that product is marketed overseas. Previously, we could ignore that, but not any longer because we are competing against the same products which are coming into Barbados faster than we are sending out.

When we had the licensing system in the past we could use that licensing system to stop items from coming into the country, but the truth now is that we cannot do it any longer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have to make sure, now that people are dumping things on us, that we must be dumping things on people too. But that role is not the role of the manufacturer or the producer; that is the role of the Government.

That is why, in the United States of America, you do not hear about X farmer marketing wheat, you hear about the Government marketing the wheat on behalf of the farmers. However, in Barbados we believe that you must produce, market and export it, too. That is foolishness. That is why I have said, Sir, during the Estimates debate, again, that the Government has to understand that whenever they see a good product it is their role to step in and acknowledge that the product is good and make sure that it has export potential and do everything within their power to make sure that product is exported.

We were fortunate, in this Parliament, to have the great Right Excellent Errol Barrow who has left with us many good examples, and I will leave this one with you, Sir. When we had a good sugar crop in 1975 the late great Right Excellent Errol Barrow did not wait on the sugar industry to give it away, he took control of that sugar crop and he made sure that he marketed that crop himself.
4.05 p.m.

Sir, this is the year 2001 and if it could be done in 1975 it should be easier in 2001. We cannot say that we do not have examples to follow because the examples are there. We need the commitment and understanding of what we have to do to propel Barbados. It does not make sense saying that w e

need to get like Singapore. Yes, we can be like Singapore but we have to do the things that the people from Singapore did to propel their country forward.

Here, in Barbados, we feel we can lay back, invite everybody to sell their goods to us and we need not sell our goods to anybody. Even in the tourism industry we feel that we should bring tourists here and pass them to other countries because we do not need them here in Barbados anymore. We just built a port and we are turning around ships to take the tourists somewhere else because Barbados is not important any more as long as we get numbers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that we do not spend numbers, we spend money; and we want tourists to spend some money in Barbados. If you tell me we have a million tourists, that is not important to me. It is the amount of money spent by the tourists in this country that is important to me. If you tell me that you are producing x number of shirts or pieces of furniture, I want to hear the amount of money received from that.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, that is why you are creating a headache for the Ministry of Finance and the Director of Statistical Affairs. Sir, once we knew what was an export product and what was a tourist. All of a sudden, we do not know the interpretation of what is a tourist. All of a sudden a tourist is someone who gets on a plane, lands here, gets on a ship, goes out to sea and comes back. He does not spend one cent in Barbados and we are bragging about the number of tourists.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is misleading the House, as usual, as it relates to statistics. The Statistical Department of Barbados has produced figures which prove that every year between 1996 and the year 2000, visitor expenditure on a daily basis, per capita, has improved in Barbados for every quarter and for every market. I can make this document, which comes from the Statistical Department, a document of the House. As a matter of fact, if you look at total expenditure in terms of US dollars, we moved in 1996 from \$531 million to \$814 million in the year 2000. The Honourable Member comes here and gives the impression that we are only looking at absolute arrivals.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have made your point.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, when the Honourable Member was wearing another hat he misled some of his people by saying the figures declined, but now the Honourable Member is wearing the Minister's hat he is saying that the figures agree. I want to know which figures

I must accept.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please get back to the substance of the Bill.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, if we are going to have land for landless farmers, they must have the necessary connecting roads. I am aware that one of the main problems in the Scotland District is that people cannot get access to their land. I hope that the Minister of Agriculture, who understands what I speak of, will do everything within his power to make sure that the farmers allocated those lands are able to access the land.

Also, we need a project so that irrigation can be put in place for those farmers with the cost of the irrigation equipment being drastically reduced. There is no doubt that the cost of irrigation is very expensive and it will discourage farmers from continuing toward their goal.

Sir, we have to recognize that there are many things interfering with the agriculture sector. One of the things, I am surprised that the Ministry of Education did not deal with this, is the one factory option. Based on the statistics, it seems to me that it is the option preferred by everybody. The main contention, as it stands now, is not to do with the single factory option but the location of the factory. Some people believe that the factory should be located close to the incinerator project which is supposed to come to Barbados.

Sir, I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will speak on these matters and explain to the House what statistics he will be taking into consideration; whether he preferred the option of having the incinerator, the sugar factory, another manufacturing plant and the other generating plant from the Barbados Light & Power; or whether they should all come together.

Also, the other manufacturing plant which I will not mention right now as I do not want to enlighten Parliament as to the best location because the Minister is having problems with one of his backbenchers who said that it should be located elsewhere. Sir, I will not say anything else on this particular matter right now.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. My brains still function fairly well and I cannot remember having any private or public discussion in the presence of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy on the preferred location for a one-factory model somewhere in the north of this country.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like the Honourable Member to withdraw the word

'north'. I never mentioned the word 'north', but as he now mentions the word 'north', he is encouraging me to think about a location, in the north, where it could be located.

Sir, during the Estimates I asked the Minister to consider the possibility of asking the Caribbean Fish Farm to breed fish to replenish the stocks around our island. The Minister has not responded to that suggestion as yet, and I hope that Barbados does not find itself in a situation where that company leaves Barbados and takes its business elsewhere and then Barbadians will have to import fish, which was being produced locally, from another country. There is no doubt, Sir, that that company has been exporting fish to the American market and bringing in valuable foreign exchange. We also have the scenario that, at some point in time there was a problem with our reef fish. I hope that the Honourable Minister understands the importance of reef fishing and that he does everything in his power to ensure that this particular company does not leave Barbados, and that they are given some working relationship with the Ministry of Fisheries to continue what they have been doing in Barbados for the last few years.

4.15 p.m.

The same way that it could have been done in Martinique, Sir, we can continue to do it in Barbados. If we allow that firm to leave the country, we would find ourselves in a situation where there would be no reef fish for our fishermen to catch. Sir, you will recognize that it might not be as major an issue as last year, but there are already some ugly signs on the east coast. I hope that we keep the entity that can replenish the fish on the reefs of Barbados and not allow our fishermen to starve during the hurricane season. A lot of people might not understand that after the fishing season is over, reef fishing is the most important type of fishing. That is the type of fishing that sustains many families in rural Barbados.

The Honourable Minister asked that we consider the possibility of the Enterprise Growth Fund administering the fund for the Agricultural Development Fund. I want to warn the Honourable Minister that it is my opinion that the best entity that can administer these funds will be the Barbados Agricultural Management Company. The Barbados Agricultural Management Company is the company that has the experts and understands the working of the agriculture industry.

We cannot develop the Enterprise Growth Fund and believe that they have all the knowledge to look after anything. The agriculture industry is not an industry that you can give to everybody to control. In my opinion, the Barbados Agricultural Management Company should be utilized and maximized. If we do not do that, we are going to find that even though we might come to this Parliament

hoping to achieve a lot, we might end up not achieving what we would like to achieve.

I would warn the Honourable Minister that if he wants to use the Enterprise Growth Fund to administer these funds then he should use the consultants from the Barbados Agricultural Management Company or, if he changes his mind, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Company, to do the job. Sir, the same way that the Barbados Agricultural Management Company could administer the money for the force-back or the replanting scheme, Sir, I think that they are best suited to administer these funds also.

I am getting the impression that the Honourable Minister of Agriculture sees the Barbados Agricultural Management Company as a company that deals only with sugar. One would have expected the Honourable Minister to spend some time dealing with agro-processing. If our agriculture industry is to move forward, we must understand that agro-processing must play a vital role in that development. Nothing was mentioned about agro-processing.

The truth is, that we are now 34 years too late in trying to develop an agro-processing industry. Some politicians misunderstood the late great Errol Walton Barrow. When we should have utilized the full use of agro-processing, we allowed Trinidad and Jamaica to outfox us when Barbados could have been the leaders as it relates to agro-processing. They misread what he said and Trinidad and Jamaica took the idea and now they are the major producers of agro-processing projects in the Caribbean. Even though Barbados had the advice for 34 years, we are yet to start the process of agro-processing. For how many years are we going to continue to follow other people when we can develop our own concept to take this country forward?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in the age of trade liberalization and globalization, yet we are behaving as though it is something yet to come and we have not recognized that globalization is already here with us.

I thank you.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to add a few comments to the contribution of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, which I think are the important aspects of the Bill. I notice that during the course of the presentation he spoke about the likelihood, and sometimes the eventuality, that Honourable Members on that Side bring to Parliament legislation which is really a clone of legislation found in other countries in the world.

I have to credit the Honourable Member for St. Philip South with exceeding even the uselessness of the Port St. Charles Bill, exceeding the recent amendment to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, and for bringing to the Parliament of Barbados a piece of legislation which is totally and completely unnecessary, and for which this House – rather than being able, perhaps, to engage in the debate about agricultural policy – had before it a Bill that is compounded in every respect.

Sir, you have a private company called the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited which has a Board of Directors in whom the sole authority for disbursing and managing the funds of the Enterprise Growth Fund, including any additional funds put before them, is fully covered. They are liable, by law, for what the Enterprise Growth Fund does. What you have now is a hybrid situation where the Government is bringing a nonsensical piece of legislation to establish what they call a statutory management committee which is going to have the right to meddle in the affairs of lawfully constituted directors, appointed under the Companies Act of Barbados to carry out their duty in accordance with that law, and tell those directors under section 5 of this Bill whether a proposal has been approved and what projects can be considered, evaluated and approved.

I am saying that violates, offends against, the principles of the Companies Act of Barbados, because it means that this law is saying that directors of a private company owned by Government, must surrender their judgement to a committee established by Parliament relative to the disbursement of public funds. It does not even say whether the money is to be a loan or a grant. If the Act had even set out to deal with the specific projects that this committee was invited, I could understand, but this nonsensical piece of legislation... and I cannot blame the Honourable Member for St. Philip South because he is not a lawyer. Sir, with a Cabinet full of lawyers, and I say that the Honourable Attorney General should not have given his certificate to this Bill because it has created a piece of legal nonsense in the laws of Barbados.
4.25 p.m.

It is worse than the Port St. Charles Bill which was never necessary and still is not necessary; worse than the last amendment to the Freehold Purchase Act which was brought to this House so that the Government could grandstand about giving tenants money to buy lots, when there was no requirement for a law to do that.

And now you have a law brought to Parliament, and the reason why this is being brought to Parliament is to justify the nonsensical and silly excuses which the Prime Minister has been giving year after year about why he could not get

this Agricultural Development Fund established; because they were waiting on legislation. What legislation? All that any sensible policy maker and technocrat would have recognized is that you needed to give the Enterprise Growth Fund some more money and say to them that that money, whether it is \$25 million, \$12 million, \$80 million, is to be used for the following kinds of projects. There was never any need for this legislation. It is a complete waste of Parliamentary time and sensible lawyers will tell you that it has created a complete anomaly relative to the powers of directors in private companies. It is absolutely madness. From the time that the Prime Minister announced that this money was going to be made available to the agricultural sector, he could have made that money available to the Enterprise Growth Fund three years ago to save the agriculture sector, to help some people start to get some agro-industries and agro-processing activities going. The nonsense that we heard is that you are waiting on a piece of legislation which would set up a statutory committee which is going to advise directors of a board, who have obligations under the Companies Act, how they must disburse money which has been made available to them; and not one of the Members on that side can see that this is absolute foolishness.

A simple decision by the Board of Directors of the Enterprise Growth Fund to accept responsibility for disbursing those funds and agree that, relative to those funds, they will accept the advice and suggestions, where appropriate, of a committee of persons who have knowledge of the kinds of projects that need to be financed in Barbados. So we are wasting time apart from the other aspects of the agricultural debate having created more legal confusion by this unnecessary piece of legislation than was desirable in the first place; and I would not allow anyone to make any excuses that they were waiting on some legislation. If this is what we were waiting on, all of the agricultural businesses that have collapsed in Barbados in the past three years should blame the BLP for dithering and talking foolishness about a legal framework for the Agricultural Development Fund, when in fact none was necessary because, from the time that you set up the Enterprise Growth Fund, you could have earmarked additional funds. And funds were available, because this Government imposed bound rates on agricultural products that were imported and the basis on which those bound rates were imposed was that some of that money would be used to protect and to help develop other agro-processing and agro-industries in Barbados. Not a cent of that money has yet made its way to save a single agricultural enterprise, and yet the Government gives the impression that it has to wait on this silly piece of legislation which is a complete waste of Parliamentary time.

That is the first part of the argument which I have to advance relative to this Bill, but there is even a worse aspect to it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that needs to be considered. As I said, the Bill said nothing about whether the money is to be

disbursed by way of loans or grant. Is it a Trust Fund? If you are going to bring legislation, at least have the courtesy to set out for this Parliament the basis on which this money is being made available because this Government has set up fund after fund in Barbados and some of those funds have been used for electoral purposes in this country and I hope that this is not another of those activities undertaken by the Government to seek to secure itself another term of office. 4.35 p.m.

If it were otherwise, you would have come to this Parliament and set out, quite clearly, the reasons for the establishment of this Fund, the terms on which the money will be lent, whether people will be required to repay it, whether the interest rate will remain consistent through the term of the loan, the kinds of activities which you are seeking to finance and all of the other things that will be relevant to a statement of agricultural policy in that regard.

The third point that needs to be made and, in fact, the most important, is what are the priorities of the Government in that regard? You get the impression that the Government is saying that, you know, there must be Mr. B in Skeetes Bay who wants some assistance setting up a stall to market fish. There may be somebody else who wants assistance setting up a facility for the marketing of some other product. But at no point has the Government said, "Look in the scale of priorities in Barbados, we want to take the sugar industry, for example, and so restructure it and convert it so that we are no longer simply producing raw cane sugar for export to our European and other markets. Instead, we want to develop a truly stratified sugar cane industry in Barbados, which sees us producing the by-products of sugar, the by-products of the cane itself, syrups and maybe, building materials." I do not know, whatever the range of things that can be produced and which Barbadian ingenuity can be brought to bear to design and Barbadian investment can finance. That is what the Minister should be telling us. He should have had an input from the Minister responsible for industry in this regard, relative to the fishing industry.

The Minister should be able to tell us that these are the priorities of my Government: to see the fishing fleet increase to X amount, to expand our fishing capacity to Y amount because, relative to Barbadian consumption of fish, including consumption of fish by tourists, these are the targets that we have to meet. What, as I say, we have is the appearance that this is some fund which is being established to prop up two enterprises here and two enterprises there. Some that might exist already and some that might be at the back of somebody's mind. But there is a way in which you systematically identify the initiatives you want to pursue. You may not be successful in all. Cotton has had a rocky history; maybe its time has not come, maybe we have not put enough money into it, maybe the management of it has been poor. I do not know.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke about onions. He spoke about the development of a distributive network for marketing for both fish and agricultural produce. All of these are attempts to try and find new ways of doing business and ensuring that Barbados is more productive and competitive, but there is also the issue which the Prime Minister speaks about all the time and, if he wants me to take him seriously, he either is going to have to infuse that into the heads of his ministers or come in here himself and explain what he means by applying agricultural solutions to agricultural problems. That, he said, is the purpose of the establishment of this Enterprise and, I think, some other entity that would be looking at the agricultural sector – to apply agricultural solutions to agricultural problems. He said that in industry we need to apply industrial solutions to industrial problems.

What is it about this Bill that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South can tell us will apply agricultural solutions to agricultural problems? That is the question that, if I were sitting in the Cabinet of Barbados or in any other capacity, the Parliamentary forum of my party, I would have to ask the Honourable Member for St. Philip South to address because that is what is critical. Without it the entire substratum for the existence of this Bill disappears because it has no legal basis.

If you wanted to come and talk about agricultural policy, bring a report in here, ask us to note it, and get up and have a debate on agriculture but do not bring a nonsensical piece of legislation which has no basis in law anywhere in the world. You could not be copying it because it is absurd. This is one occasion when I say you could not have copied this. Produce for me evidence that this could be copied from any Commonwealth jurisdiction and I would have to write the Leader of the Country and tell him that his key legal officer, his Attorney General, deserves to be dismissed.

I am not going to say that should happen to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, yet. He would have to get up and explain to me how this gets on the Statute Books of Barbados. It does not make sense.

You want a Committee and you have money. The Committee is to advise how that money is to be disbursed. You already have an entity that has Directors accountable under the Companies legislation in Barbados. Forget the legislation. Do not take us down this road. I appeal to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South. This is entirely unnecessary. State your priorities. Establish your Committee. Find the money, put it in the hands of the Enterprise Growth Fund and have the Committee advise the Directors of the Enterprise Growth Fund how this money should be disbursed. Save us the old talk. Save us the delays and start to deal with real problems in the agricultural sector.

This could have been done three years ago. I do not blame the Honourable Member for St. Philip South because he was not in the House three years ago. He came and found a mess and without relying, as he should have, on the Opposition who had greater experience in these things, and that is a fact...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: ...getting things out of a mess and that is what we have been experiencing. We found the sugar industry in a mess and we found a new legal arrangement to try to solve some of those problems of the sugar sector. As Minister of Finance, I made it quite clear, "I am applying a moratorium" and I got the Prime Minister's concurrence – because, you know, you need these things – on the establishment of any more statutory corporations in Barbados.

We have a lot and we have not analyzed their performance. Parliament is doing a great disservice to Barbados when it continues to add to the list of those Statutory Corporations, without ensuring that the ones that exist are delivering on the policies of the Government.

What the Minister of Agriculture has done is create a statutory entity which, in itself, has no powers other than to advise. And then, what he has also done is require that part of the portfolio, which is being managed by the Enterprise Growth Fund, be audited by the Auditor-General. So the absurdity is that the Auditor-General is going to have to segregate, under section 10, the account of that Fund from the overall operations of the Enterprise Growth Fund. That does not make sense either and what is even worse about the whole matter is that the Minister, under section 11, is also given powers – and unnecessary powers at that – to make regulations to establish the criteria for determining the projects and programmes that are to benefit from the Fund.

So you have set up a Committee but you have also reserved power in the Minister to make regulations to tell a Committee – which in fact should be advising the Minister, rather than the other way around – what criteria should be used for the disbursement of the Funds.

As I say, in every sense of the word, this is legal confusion. A Committee with expertise established subject, however, to the Minister making regulations to tell him what are the criteria. As I say, that was not necessary. If you want to say who gets the money, well, take the money and send it down to the Enterprise Growth Fund and do like some of the other Ministers. Write a letter and send the person down there and tell them that we want them to lend money to the person. That has been going on since 1994, with regularity. In fact, some people are even told, "You do not have to pay

it back, as long as you vote for the Barbados Labour Party."

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Well, you cannot determine it. That is the problem. That is why, when they say that they think they do not have to pay it back, a problem arises, because they have to prove that they voted for the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very uncomfortable with this design. This does not bring any creativity to the fore. Somewhere latent in the Honourable Member for St. Philip South is some creativity waiting to burst onto the scene. This is not going to help it.

The problem will be that when his creativity does not burst forth, it means that there are going to be thousands of potential farmers and existing farmers who, at the end of the day, are going to suffer because we have chosen a path for the establishment of this Fund that does not lend to proper accountability, is not transparent and, to my view, is not a process that has the kind of integrity to which we are accustomed in the system. And this will affect fundamentally the obligation of Directors of a private company to their shareholders under the Companies Act.

It is an unnecessary and undesirable piece of legislation and I am not going to be supporting it in its current form.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I will support the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We, on this Side have a more consistent record of supporting worthy and laudable policies with respect to agriculture than does the Honourable Gentleman on that Side.

It would have been interesting to be part of the discussions on agriculture and hear the Honourable Member for St. John pour forth, with the passion and assurance that he poured forth this afternoon on this matter, when his Party was administering over a state of confusion, never before and hopefully never afterwards seen, in agriculture.

Four Ministers of Agriculture in probably a year or so, with at least two at one and the same time. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy speaks about matters relating to cotton and other aspects of agricultural performance and I wonder where he was, what he was doing, what he was wearing, when his Party was having a field day making a mess of the cotton industry in Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Thankfully, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South is at the helm and he, in is very

short time, has done great and wondrous things for agriculture.

I speak in this debate, Sir, as a representative for a constituency which, for a large part, is a farming constituency and therefore a measure such as this Agricultural Development Trust Bill which is intended, Sir, to provide concessional finance and technical assistance for our farming community is one which we, in Christ Church East, will welcome.

Sir, in my constituency, our involvement in agriculture is largely non-sugar agriculture and farming. Much of the sugar is in the adjacent constituency of Christ Church East Central. Certainly, we all know the very deep and abiding relationship between the cultivation of fields in sugar and those fields being made available, by way of rotation, for non-sugar agriculture.

I want to salute the Honourable Member for St. Philip South on a good performance in the agricultural sector during the last year. According to statistics, for example, Sir, non-sugar agriculture grew to some 5.8 per cent during the year 2000. That was driven largely by an increase in fish landings of 1.8 per cent – notwithstanding the fish kills, growth in fresh fruit production of some 2.8 per cent, and an increase in the food crops harvested.

As you know, Sir, certainly within the two major bread basket areas in my constituency, they are into food crops. In fact, the statistics from the Statistical Department would have indicated an increase in production of almost all of the quantities of...

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I would not give figures here but certainly on beans, beets, cabbages, carrots, cucumbers, okras, pumpkins, tomatoes, sweet potatoes and yams.

Sir, it is on that practical everyday level that the people in my constituency live their farming experience. So that for them any mechanism which creates an opportunity to provide some funding would be important. They also recognized that this Bill creating this fund is intended for larger and more strategic purposes.
4.45 p.m.

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, in his introduction to the Bill certainly indicated, quite clearly, that the Fund and the Trust, indeed, would have major strategic targets of further instruction in the sugar industry and of developing an integrated cotton industry. I can say that in the cotton industry the Ministry of Industry and International

Business has been working with agriculture ... In our view, yes, we need to grow cotton but we, in the industry, are more particularly interested in developing the manufacturing components of the cotton industry.

It is only reasonable, it is only sensible and it is only practical that Barbados, being one of the few countries in the world identified as being able to grow the purest sea island cotton, should capitalize on the intellectual property inherent in that fact and be a location in the world where top quality sea island cotton is manufactured. Champagne made in France is considered to be more authentic than champagne which is made anywhere else in the world.

Over the years we have exported our cotton as a commodity rather than as a brand and a tangible product. When we check the very high prices which are fetched on the international market and at the final end of the distribution chain, like in Harrods, Marks & Spencers and other retail stores of note, for scarves and socks and other aspects of cotton we know that there is potential but only when we have an integrated cotton programme. I will be happy to work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in moving in that direction.

We would grow some cotton, yes, but we can also import whatever additional cotton is required in order to support the manufacture of cotton fabric in Barbados and brand it as top quality sea island cotton. That is what this Agriculture Development Trust will be able to facilitate.

Mention was made earlier of the scope for exploiting the full potential of the black belly sheep in terms of having land – and I must laud the work of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development again – a strategic resource, inherent value by branding, and intellectual property. We certainly have worked closely with agriculture in terms of the development of export crops, particularly value-added production, in areas such as pepper sauce and preserves. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has done significant work in helping the farmers, including the farmers in Christ Church, to improve their production and quality and we have provided assistance in the Ministry of Industry and International Business by way of design, packaging and other aspects which would help them do the marketing.

In fact, Sir, earlier today, during the lunchtime period of Parliament, I was able to slip away to go to attend to a very pleasant and very much related matter. Today, Sir, we launched an e-commerce site called ShopatBarbados.com. ShopatBarbados.com is a fully operational e-commerce site dedicated to the export of Barbadian products. At the launch today, Sir, there were available some 100 Barbadian items

including our pepper sauces, jams and other preserves, craft and other export items. We believe, Sir, that those innovative and modern approaches to the marketing of our agricultural products, particularly the value-added, agro-processing products, will provide a greater depth and resilience to the agricultural sector.

The Agriculture Development Trust will also be important in the further development of the horticulture industry. The horticulture industry in Barbados continues to be a major award winner internationally. Again, through mechanisms such as this Trust, we will be able to leverage the worldwide recognition which we have in horticulture for the backward linkages to increase our production.

There is, also, the harvesting and processing of fish for export. Many persons may not know but over the years significant research has been undertaken in terms of how we handle fish, how we process it and how we deal with its distribution. I was very, very pleased to notice that at the Barbados Manufacturers Exhibition (BMEX) this year, for the first time, on exhibit was canned flying fish. One could purchase a can of steamed flying fish in authentic Bajan sauce.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Yes, on the market. It has been on the market now for only a few weeks.

So that the processing of agricultural produce, particularly our fish, for example, has gone to a new level. This is a product which, if properly pushed, the Agriculture Development Trust...

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: HIPAC. A Barbadian company. They are producing canned curried shrimp and other products, as well, but there is steamed Barbadian flying fish in cans, which tastes good too. I sampled the product and it was first class. It was ready to be eaten. You just have to warm it in the microwave for 50 seconds or you could warm it in a saucepan. The sauce is authentic. We know that we can get a good steamed fish sauce by drinking it. It is an authentic sauce. Those are the things that are happening, even as we speak. Charting new paths, charting new directions. There were four steamed flying fish in a can, Sir. A wonderful innovation.

Sir, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, with the aid of the Agriculture Development Trust, will continue strengthening the other linkages with the tourism sector. I laud them for the work on the Land for the Landless Project and the other initiatives which they have identified.

Sir, one of the major constraints facing the non-food Agriculture sector in Barbados is the fact that Barbados is not a high rainfall country. Some of our other neighbours are able to depend on heavier rainfall, as well as continuously running streams and rivers, for irrigation purposes. This is why it is very important that those areas in Barbados which are able to benefit from existing irrigation capacity be adequately protected.

There are two areas in my constituency which, in the 1970s and early 1980s, under an enlightened Barbados Labour Party administration, were the beneficiaries of the integrated rural development scheme. Under that scheme, the existence of irrigation wells in these areas was leveraged to provide irrigation across a fairly large area. Sayers Court, Gibbons Boggs, Pegwell Boggs and Chancery Lane form a strip of land, if you are going from Oistins, which runs on the left side of the Enterprise and Chancery Lane road. It is all agriculture. It goes from the Pegwell Boggs area, past the Spiritual Baptist Temple, right up to the bottom of Wilcox Hill; wonderful agricultural land with irrigation.
4.55 p.m.

Similarly, in the Lead Vale, Fair View, Charnocks and St. Patricks areas, irrigation pipe work was installed to take water from wells in the areas and make it available to a range of farmers. They have functioned as a generous bread basket within that constituency by providing a major contribution to non-sugar agriculture in Barbados.

Sir, part of what we need to do, in addition to having our macro policy right, is to ensure that at the level of the enterprise and at the level of production a number of conflicts are worked out. The conflicts between farmers and shepherds go back as far as the Genesis story of Cain and Abel where the two brothers were pursuing different aspects of agriculture and had different interests in the land. We have that problem in one of the bread baskets of my constituency, at present.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the work which has been installed, the investment of the farmers and the future viability of agriculture in the Lead Vale, Fair View, Charnocks and St. Patricks areas have been threatened by cows. A farmer in the area called yesterday and said that sometimes up to fifty cows, at a time, travel across this area. It is alleged that they come from a particular farm where they receive less than good care and where there could be as many as one hundred cows. They are able to escape what limited fencing there is, particularly at nights, and wander around the area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the net effect is that our ability, as a nation, to meet the kind of target which we want to meet, our ability, as a nation, to utilize our limited agriculture base

in terms of our land and even more limited irrigation supplies, is being threatened by the fact that a livestock farmer is not exercising due care and concern for the interest of other farmers who are in other areas of agriculture.

This matter has been drawn to the attention of the animal pound who feel overwhelmed by this large catch which they are required to deal with.

Sir, the fact of the matter is that we do have some issues which are of genuine concern to the farming community. One farmer spoke to me this morning and indicated that he lost \$2 500 in this last crop just by the visit, one night, of forty or so cows.

Sir, it goes beyond that because the soil is very deep and with constant irrigation remains soft. When trampled by a herd of cows, it becomes nothing more than a solid compact mass. The irrigation pipe then becomes broken and you lose the existing crop.

I have already spoken to the Ministry of Agriculture, which has promised to assist, and I wanted to highlight the situation to indicate that, notwithstanding excellent macro policy on the part of the Government, there are practical, everyday challenges, not of the Government's nor country's making, which farmers face. These impact on the ability of the individual farmer to generate income to participate in the strengthening of the rural communities into which we are pouring the initial investment; and of Barbados, as a country, to be able to meet this target of having a viable agriculture sector.

I look forward to the Ministry of Agriculture assisting us in bringing this matter to a very speedy conclusion because it affects an entire area into which the Government, itself, had previously put an investment and represents one of the areas of Barbados where production of agricultural produce is not subject to the vagaries of the weather.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in closing I want to salute the Minister of Agriculture on this and the other initiatives which the Ministry has taken to advance the interest of agriculture in Barbados. I am satisfied that they have a clear strategic focus. I am very satisfied that they are not merely introducing programmes willy-nilly but have identified the major restructuring which the agriculture sector needs to undergo. They are ensuring that they give very clear policy guidelines, that they have put development finance in place to finance the initiatives which the farmers in Barbados would need to undertake. The farmers, certainly the farmers whom I represent, have every confidence that the Minister of Agriculture is committed to their ultimate success. They are happy to support this initiative which has been designed to

provide concessional financing and technical assistance to farmers to offset the effects of trade liberalization on what is one of our most productive sectors of the economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity provided by the Leader of the Opposition to make a few points on this Bill.

First of all, I would be failing in my duty as Leader of the House if I did not compliment the Minister of Agriculture on what I thought was an outstanding second reading presentation. It was very measured, very comprehensive, very analytical and very strategic in its wholeness.

Sir, I want to say a few words about marketing. One accepts the comment of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that in strategising about agriculture it is important that due attention be paid to the aspect of marketing agricultural produce. I can speak to that from personal experience when, at my little plot at Neils in the 1980s, I grew hot peppers and okras for export through BADMC. I had some unhappy experiences with that produce because they would say they wanted all the hot peppers the following day so you would pick thousands of pounds which got soft because it took four days for them to be picked up. You then ended up selling them to the hot sauce processors at forty cents a pound because they were buying them as seconds.

If you were registered with BADMC, in those days, they would tell you that in six weeks' time they would require cucumbers or melons. When a thousand pounds of the cucumbers and melons became ready, they advised me that they were only paying ten cents a pound, so I ploughed them back into the ground and that was the end for me. Therefore, I believe that marketing is important. I would like to see the Extension Officers of the Ministry in strategic planning exercises with the small farmers of this country. I do not know when last anyone saw a Bajan cherry. There is something that has affected them for the last 18 months or so. The trees are alive but they are not flowering. That has been so for the last 18 months.

5.05 p.m.

Secondly, something has been attacking the citrus. The leaf miner has gone at citrus. If you only look at Ras Iley's plot below the Ministry of Transport and Works; the plants looked healthy three or four months ago and now the plants are leafless. I cannot recall any information being given to the average person, by the Extension Officers, about this problem and what you should do about it.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Do you not think that it would be better for them to have a programme and tell us what to do?

The Government has recognized that one has to prepare facilities for marketing locally, regionally and internationally. The Minister of International Business spoke today of how they are trying to use the Internet to assist in marketing Barbados produce outside of Barbados. Within Barbados, the Government has embarked on a programme for the development of markets. Land has been identified at Redmans Village, opposite the gas station. It might be coming to Cabinet shortly for acquisition if it cannot be done by private treaty. It has been agreed by Cabinet and Government is negotiating to purchase the land which formally housed another gas station, then owned by the late Mr. Miller, to erect marketing facilities, as well as to create a terminus for the minibuses. The minibuses would come into Redmans Village and park where there used to be an old gas station. The minibuses would then be facing the new Shell gas station. South of the car park would be a market for that area.

A similar market is being planned for the Glebe, St. George, I must confess that I am very impressed with what I have seen at Cheapside. I was away last week and I returned on Sunday. I went to work yesterday, even though it was a holiday. When I went over to the Post Office, to Home Affairs, I could not believe what I was seeing there; the amount of work that has been done by the contractor on the old market. The project is moving at a fantastic pace. Those are three projects that I can speak of that I know that Government is involved in and that will be completed during this fiscal year.

Secondly, I wish to update the House on the position with cotton. When I spoke in here, in December, about the CARSICOT and Scothall's matter, I indicated that I had no intention of reaping up the past. The fact is that the Government has settled the international arbitration. The draft of the reassignment of the trademark has been sent to my office and it is being worked on. We hope to have that resolved very quickly, which will enable Barbados to recover the trademark.

The third crucial matter, before we can talk about the redevelopment of the cotton industry, is that both sides acknowledged that the cotton industry has tremendous potential for revenue earning for Barbados and as a substitute for sugar. However, there is an unhappy episode that we have to go through. Sir, that is the agreement that was signed during the Democratic Labour Party's Government between CARSICOT and the two Japanese companies. I cannot pronounce the names without the files in front of me because the names are very awkward. Two companies agreed to purchase all the cotton produced in Barbados, coming from CARSICOT. Sir, that went on from

1987 and the company CARSICOT never received any money.

The Japanese undertook in those agreements...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, let me be careful. If they received money, we have not received any money since 1990. We may have received from 1987 and 1988. I think, from the crop 1989/1990, we have not received any money and I am sure about that.

The Japanese companies gave all kinds of excuses why they would not remit the funds which were due, as royalties, to Barbados. The cardinal excuse was that in Barbados there were a lot of cases before the court and they did not know who to pay; and that is one of the reasons we tried to get the Scothall's business cleaned up so that there is one payee, namely, the Government of Barbados, as the other shareholder in the company.

Under the agreement, the Japanese were to provide accounts every three months. I have not been able, and the persons who have been advising me, including a former Cabinet Secretary and a former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, have not been able to find any record of the Japanese sending accounts back to Barbados.

I took the matter to Cabinet and Cabinet instructed me, as Attorney General, to write to the two companies in Japan, and say to them that we wanted them to submit accounts for verification so that we could try and verify and settle the account between themselves and Barbados. Do you know that those people had the gall not to reply until after the Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Japan in October, 2000 with copies of the correspondence? They said, "Oh! We were waiting for you to come," but they have not yet sent the accounts. After the Minister of Foreign Affairs went in October and met with them, they sent a response. Do you know how they responded to me? They asked how I could be writing them and where I got my authority from. My letter said that I was instructed by the Cabinet of Barbados, of which I am a Member and Attorney General of Barbados, and they wrote me back and asked what authority I have.

I do not curse, Sir, unless I have to. When I got that letter, I got on very badly in my office. I was the only one in my office at the time. However, we are dealing with that matter because Dr. Wickham of the Ministry of Agriculture has worked out, and provided for the Government, an estimate of what the Japanese owe us and it is not money to be sneezed at, Sir. I am not going to disclose it today because we are still negotiating, but that matter is on-going and I hope to resolve it fairly soon.

5.15 p.m.

I wish the House to understand that the Japanese are very uncooperative and I am going to have to use some rough tactics with them. It comes to a point when you have to change gears. The resurgence of the cotton industry does not depend on our getting that money. That will go back into what we had to offset to pay for the national arbitration. The resurgence of the cotton industry depends upon the recovery and reassignment of the trade mark. As I said, the draft document is there. I saw and approved it before I went away and we are now negotiating to have it signed.

Now, in respect of the Bill, the Leader of the Opposition has criticized the Bill as an unnecessary Bill which should not have been brought, *et cetera*.

Now this Government, rightly or wrongly, has always said that it prefers when we are dealing with large sums of money or large investments, to shroud it in legislative clothing. This Fund is going to be the recipient of substantial revenues over time. The Government, therefore, deemed it appropriate that the revenues, as Section 5 sets out, should be managed by a Fund Manager and all that the Bill is saying and all that we are doing, as a matter of policy, is appointing the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited as the Manager of the Fund. So what is wrong with that? The expenditure, proposals, activities, *et cetera* are the province of the Committee which will evaluate them and make recommendations, and the Honourable Member for St. John is behaving as though this is a novel experience. The Minister of Agriculture is going to give his experience of how a Fund similarly operates at the Central Bank...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Yes, there is nothing new. It is foolishness that people would not search their memories, but we have a fund named the Small Hotel Investment Fund which is managed by the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited.

There is a fund called Small Hotels of Barbados, Inc., which is a company that plays an advisory role to the Fund through membership of the Investment Committee. What has happened is that hoteliers bring proposals which are evaluated by the Committee and recommendations are then made to the Enterprise Growth Fund, as Fund Manager. That is all that is happening here, and what we have done is go one step further and put this whole business in its own separate piece of legislation. That is all. I wish to say that this model was strongly approved by the Ministry of Finance, as far back as 4th September, 2000. The correspondence says:

- (a) "The Agricultural Development Fund will be entrusted to the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited as Fund Manager..."

- (b) "A Management Commission should be established to determine the projects which should be funded..."

Those were some of the instructions from the Ministry of Finance...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No, but I have explained that at the beginning. We feel that these large enterprises should have their own separate legislation. We may be wrong...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No, but this Fund, because it is going to be the recipient of large sums over time, we felt that it should have its own legislation. The Enterprise Growth Fund is only going to be Fund Manager. I gave an example of the Small Hotels Investment Fund, the Industrial Credit Fund...

Asides.

Mr. D. H. J. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The point that I am making is, the Enterprise Growth Fund is the recipient of revenues and is going to be Fund Manager of this Fund, which is consecutively not much difference because what it is doing is managing the other Funds too except that those are its own funds and it is not required to discuss with anybody else how it disburses these funds. It is a private company. So that, as part of its overall portfolio, it is going to have to manage this Fund, which you might want to describe as a Statutory Fund.

I am saying if that is the Government's objective to manage those instructions, they should have been responded to by saying that no new law is necessary. There is a Board of Directors. There is a sub-committee to advise the Board of Directors to indicate how this money is to be spent. That is my view. You do not need a piece of new legislation to do that.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: That is where there is a division between the two of us. The Honourable Member feels that a new piece of legislation is not needed. The Government feels that, as a matter of policy, for these kinds of projects you need separate legislation and if we are wrong, Sir, we are wrong. I do not think that it will detract from the efficacy of the arrangement and the desire of the Government to do something for the agricultural sector before 2005, to put it in a state of readiness to deal with the challenges of liberalization...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, therefore, rise only to say that I support the Bill...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No, I read it. I certified this Bill a long time ago.

Sir, I must say that I have read the Bill as this file will show. I have already said to this House that I do not bring Bills here unless I have read them. It may be that I never picked up on this point until today, when it was made, but I do not agree with it.

I am saying that we have had the experience of other Funds. There is the Small Hotels Investment Fund which is managed by the Central Bank and all that we have done is to put this Fund, rather than having it open-ended as a Trust Fund, we have had to create a trust instrument...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No, it does not say that...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: It does say:

“And in respect of evaluating the proposals and making the recommendations, *et cetera*...” But we have not created it, as under section 21 of the Interpretation Act. It does not have its own corporate existence, as such. It may be that the Enterprise Growth Fund would be the agent. For example, if they are going to receive funds from an external source, it may be that the funds will go to the Enterprise Growth Fund and then be transferred to the Agricultural Trust Fund...

Asides.

5.25 p.m.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, I just want to say that I certified this Bill on the 19th February and I would have read it. I cannot sign them unless I read them.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Yes, that is a stronger point but...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No. It is not an entity.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Committee, because the idea was that since you did not create Trustees as such...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: ...If you had Trustees, Trustees would have a seal. Instead of Trustees, you have a Committee and you let them manage the seal and have the custody of the seal.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: We might have to deal with that, Sir, in the Committee because since it is an unincorporated body, it can only act through the Committee. We just have to amend this later on to give the Committee the power...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: That is a sound point.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: With those comments, I beg to support this Bill, Sir, and I take the last point made that we have to do an adjustment, in respect of the rights and obligations of the Fund.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in winding up let me first thank all those Honourable Members who spoke for their contributions, and let me also thank the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central for giving way so that we could bring this discussion to a close.

I would like to take this opportunity to respond to a couple of things mentioned by the Honourable Members on the Other Side. I am glad that I have been able to benefit from the assistance given by the lawyers on this Side in rebutting the Honourable Member for St. John's contention that the Bill was unnecessary.

I would just like to draw to the attention of the Honourable Chamber that I was involved in similar arrangements which started some time ago during my tenure as a Director of the Central Bank with such a facility called the Barbados Investment Fund which is managed by the Caribbean Financial Services Corporation (CFSC). The Honourable Member for St. John, who is a former Minister of Finance, will be aware of this and know that the Central Bank is the major provider of funds for this facility and that it is managed in the same way that we are asking the Enterprise Growth Fund to manage the Agriculture Development Fund.

The Caribbean Financial Services Corporation manages the Barbados Investment Fund. There is also a Management Committee which looks after the projects at the level of

review of the proposals, in the same way we are asking the Management Committee, in this case, to review the proposals for the Agricultural Development Fund.

When I was a member of the Central Bank Board, I was a member of the Management Committee for the Barbados Investment Fund so we are not inventing anything here. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas cited the example in the case of the small hotels and I cited another example that has been working reasonably successfully for some time now. The Honourable Member for St. John, as I said earlier, should be aware of that.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. If the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, as Minister of Agriculture, had followed exactly the precept of the Barbados Investment Fund (BIF), I would not have spoken in this debate at all.

There is no legislation in Barbados establishing the Barbados Investment Fund. It is a fund which is established and managed, it is true, by the Caribbean Financial Services Corporation, but it is established under the Central Bank. The Central Bank has many other funds and lines of credit which it formally establishes under the rubric of the Central Bank as a legal entity.

The problem that you have here is slightly different and, therefore, I am saying had you followed the BIF format I would have had no difficulty whatsoever. But there is a difference between that and what you, as Minister, are seeking to establish here and that is the point that we are making.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Thank you very much, the Honourable Opposition Leader, for that clarification.

The Honourable Member for St. John sought to give the impression that we have not been clear in our articulation of how we intend to utilize these funds. He also said that it was not made clear whether or not these funds were provided in the form of grants or loans. I would take this opportunity to repeat – something I said earlier and I hope it will be made clear – the activities and projects we intend to use these funds to support.

I said, first of all, we would use the funds to facilitate the structure of the sugar industry, the development of an integrated cotton industry, support the Barbados black belly sheep industry, the development of the agricultural industry, the harvesting and processing of fish for export, the strengthening of the linkages with the other sectors – particularly tourism, and feasibility studies and technical assistance in any of these areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, without going into any detail, if we are not clear on how we intend to use these funds, the Honourable Member for St. John must be willing to let us provide him with the details of those proposals which are to be written and submitted to the Management Committee for their review.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me please elucidate on this point because the Minister is proceeding on a wrong premise. I never said that the Minister, in his opening speech, did not say how he felt the funds will be applied or what kind of arrangements will be made.

Nowhere in the legislation does it say that the money must only be lent or that it can be granted. None of that is in the legislation and that is why it is important for the Minister to establish, either by regulations or otherwise, the parameters for the loans and the kinds of projects for which the money is being lent and to set out his vision in that regard.
5.35 p.m.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, just let me continue and make another point here in respect of how these funds can be used to facilitate the further development of the agriculture sector. It is within the fund's ability to create positive shifts in the future development of the industry. Not only will projects be accessed for viability but they will also be a conscious effort made to promote those ventures which could lead to the development of secondary products and processes. This is in response to the point made when it was said that no mention was being made, specifically, of agro-processing being looked after with these funds.

The Honourable Members who spoke are quite aware that there is an urgent need to move Barbados away from its position as a primary producer to the next level where primary production feeds manufacturing for value added. Mention was made of the integrated cotton industry where the previous concentration was on raw cotton for export. We will be seeking to shift our focus to move along the continuum where spinning of yarn becomes a reality and ventures aimed at producing by-products from primary goods would receive favourable consideration by the Agriculture Development Trust.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, early in the presentation I gave a quote from the Prime Minister when he delivered the 1999 Budgetary proposals. I said that the proposed development of the Agriculture Development Trust was to make available the resources to subsidize the sector and to provide concessional financing with funding for technical assistance to the farming community. I also made it clear that the Agriculture Development Fund will not be used as a slush

fund and it will not be used as a fund where the 'marish' and the 'parish', who have some interest in agriculture, could expect – without a carefully thought through proposal and without deigning or seeking to be involved in activity that fits well within the guidelines for the usage of those funds – to access valuable institutional finance for such purposes. So, it is not a slush fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We said we want to use these funds in a targeted way to help with the repositioning, the retooling and the recapitalizing of the sector with a concentration on those activities which we have mentioned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the past much emphasis was placed on subsidies granted through funds provided under the Government's central budget. These were non-refundable and tended to encourage a sense of dependency among the beneficiaries. This is what we are seeking to move away from in the case of the Agriculture Development Trust. In the Agriculture Development Fund, financing will be from funds provided to the fund manager to roll over and invest for future growth, and that says it all, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are not saying that all funds would be provided in the form of loans because, naturally, to facilitate feasibility studies and other technical aspects we would appreciate that, for a Fund that is to help with the movement forward in the agricultural sector, at some stage funds would have to be released to facilitate the feasibility studies and the technical work; but in the main, the funds would be provided in the form of loans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just let me go a little quicker because I need to get over to present an address in about an hour's time at Grand Barbados, so just let me respond to a point raised by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, when he was speaking about the Land for the Landless Project, without the benefit of detailed information on the planning process for this project, mentioned, quite correctly, that some emphasis should be placed on the road infrastructure in the Scotland District to make it easier for farmers to get to their plots. He also said that some emphasis should be placed on irrigation facilities. He said that farmers should not have to underwrite the cost to do the clearing of the area and the ploughing, *et cetera*. I want to assure him that some of those costs are built into the project.

I have an estimated capital cost for the project, here, and it speaks to the following. It speaks to surveying. It speaks to irrigation services. It speaks to land clearing, and this work has started and the Soil Conservation Unit has been helping the farmers in this regard. It speaks to refurbishing a building in the Scotland District area for use by the St. Andrew Small Farmers and Cottage Industries Cooperative, and it speaks, also, to training and orientation exercises.

As I said earlier, an important component of this project would have to be training and the Rural Development Commission has been helping in this regard. In the early part of this month the first such training programme for the farmers in the Scotland District area will take place. The capital cost for the project, which will be met by funds provided in the Estimates this year and funds provided last year, speaks to project office equipment, fencing and leasing of lands.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just provided that information to let the Honourable Member for St. Lucy know that we are not going to burden the farmers in the initial stages of this exercise and that we recognize that it is very important that the Ministry look after certain areas so as to make it more opportune for the farmers to start activity over in the Scotland District.
5.45 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are seeking solutions to agricultural problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few remarks, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

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

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 – 11 were called and passed.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to move that the Schedules 1, 2 and 3 become Schedules to the Bill.

On the motion of Hon. A. P. WOOD, seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, 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. A. P. WOOD seconded by Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Agricultural Development Fund Act, 2001.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to move that this Honourable House be adjourned until Tuesday, July 18, 2000, at 11 o'clock in the morning.

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

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, July 18, 2000, at 11 o'clock in the morning was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
5.55 p.m.

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