

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

RESUMPTION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This House is resumed.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a contribution to the second reading of this Appropriation Bill. I want, first of all, to salute the Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for putting together Estimates of Expenditure as captured under the Appropriation Bill, which address many of the issues for which it is appropriate that Government's finances be committed.

By very sharp contrast, however, the Honourable Member for St. John and Leader of the Opposition appeared more to be interested in setting a time record. He wanted to last the distance. Sir, there is a sport which is somewhat alien to us but more known to radio call-in programme persons like the "Cement Man" that indicates bull fighting and rodeos. One of the major feats is to see how long this athlete can sit on the back of a raging bull. The Honourable Member for St. John has appeared to have found himself in that predicament. So outstanding, so robust, so athletically agile was the Minister of Finance in presenting his Estimates, that the Honourable Member for St. John barely could relegate himself to attempt to stay until the clock ran out on him.

He failed, therefore, to make contact with the issues which are pertinent to the debate on the Estimates. He failed to make contact with matters relating to the economy and that is fundamental, Sir. Clearly, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John is uncomfortable with the very comfortable position in which the economy had been steered by this administration. He failed to make any contact, Sir, with matters relating to the performance of Government's revenue, with our expenditure targets or with the programmes of the Government. Given that he has failed, Sir, to do any of those things I would attempt to cover some ground for him.

Aside.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Sir, we have to the authority, this is not some partisan spin doctor at work. The Central Bank of Barbados in giving the review of the performance in the Barbados economy for the year 2000, spoke in very clear and precise terms. We all know, Sir, that the economy of Barbados recorded a number of noticeable achievements during the year 2000.

First of all, for the first time in history, there were eight consecutive years of economic growth. If you

look back over the long history of Barbados you will find that economic growth has been somewhat of a roller-coaster, short periods up and short periods down. What was important, Sir, is that you must never forget that compared to the very low rate of unemployment, as characterised by last year's some 9.3 per cent, that Barbados had become accustomed to periods of high unemployment. In fact, there was a school of thought that a persistent high unemployment rate was a structural feature of the economy of Barbados and the Caribbean. That, clearly is not part of the philosophy of the Barbados Labour Party.

We committed ourselves in 1994, to bringing unemployment down to negligible proportions. That was 'pooh-poohed' on by the Opposition. Their legacy, Sir, is one of high unemployment to which they themselves from time to time have contributed. So I can understand their skepticism about any possibility of this Barbados economy being able to achieve anything other than what they are used to. Sir, not only has the rate of unemployment decreased but more people are confident about the economy and more people are seeking work.

In addition, Sir, the annual business outlook, the survey of business opinions and business responses on matters relating to the economy also indicates that the business sector, by and large, is confident about the future of the Barbados economy.

Sir, during the course of the year, the economy continued to grow, that growth of 3.7 per cent in the year 2000 is a figure that is very commendable. Indeed, it is a great rate of growth when compared to the 10-year average across of the Caribbean region of some 3 per cent as noted by the Caribbean Development Bank and other independent persons who have studied the average rates of growth across the Caribbean. Sir, when also compared to the 10-year average of the world rate of growth, somewhere in the region of 4.8 per cent, Sir, 3.7 per cent for Barbados is an outstanding performance. That is well over 1.4 per cent higher than in 1999 when the rate was 2.3 per cent. Sir, what was important is that the rate growth was led by our international trading sectors. The tourism, agricultural and the manufacturing sectors all contributed towards the performance which we have had.

The point has to be made that we recognised there were a few years during which the non-trading sectors grew faster than the trading sectors. That was very much in keeping with the theme of several Budget presentations by the Minister of Finance where we were aiming to build capacity so that the rate of activity in the construction sector was fueled largely by the construction of tourism related projects. A number of those projects are now on stream and are beginning to earn foreign exchange, whereby boosting the contribution of tourism to the productive sectors.

If one looks at the large number of tourism investments which are in the preparation and institutional stage, one can only see the pattern continuing. The growth would not just continue but growth would be enhanced considering the heightened contribution of the tourism sector when the Hilton hotel is completed and when Sandy Lane, which only opened this year, would be into full flight. Consider also, Sir, when the various projects from Apes Hill, Villa Nova and various other projects all come on stream.

Asides.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy wants me to mention that he would hope that during the course of the year, the tourism project materialises at the Naval Base as well.

The fact is that one of the constraints which has been holding back Barbados from increasing its level of earnings in tourism has been the lack of capacity. The addition of the 400 rooms to the portfolio of the Gems Project was part of the Government of Barbados' strategic focus. That pattern of refurbishment and expansion in the tourism sector has also been facilitated by the provision of financing. Some \$30 million have been allocated for the financing of the expansion of the hotel plant, particularly small hotels, by this administration.

Therefore, tourism in the year 2000, after a weak 1999, was able to show real growth and we will expect to continue, Sir. The agricultural sector showed growth as well, as indicated by the Report of the Central Bank.

I am glad to see the Honourable Member for St. John is able to join us this morning, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the production of raw sugar rose by 9.7 per cent reaching 58 400 tonnes. Contrast that, Sir, to the period in the Democratic Labour Party's time when we were down, scraping the bottom of the syrup tank to find 38 000 tonnes. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture will speak more on that matter, Sir.

I am singling out two of the sectors which have contributed to the strong growth in the economy during the last year for which Ministry, I have the honour to be responsible, the international business sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

10:10 a.m.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is operating illegally, Sir, by not having a quorum.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER noted there was not a quorum and the bell was rung.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

You may proceed.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe the Honourable Member for St. John can see it fit to return now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, two of the sectors which have contributed to the good performance in the trading sectors, the off-shore production services sectors, notwithstanding the severe threat of the OECD, performed outstandingly during the year 2000.

The number of international business companies registered have surpassed all previous years. Approximately 456 international business companies have been registered.

Aside.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition made a great song and dance about what he did when he had some national responsibility for international business, but I must state for the record, lest the record is vulgarized by his inaccuracies, that the number of international business entities registered in Barbados today is more than twice what it was in 1993 to 1994, when he had a passing encounter with international business sectors. He had a brush with it and he has not had a brush with it for a very, very long time and specifically since he is now a retired lawyer.

In that context, Sir, the manufacturing sector made a positive contribution. Under the pressure of trade liberations many persons predicted that the sector would not have been able to hold its own. Working hand in hand with the manufacturing sector, we were able to just about hold our own. There was a marginal decline about half-percentage point in the growth of the sector. Exports were in the region of some \$380 000 000, 45 per cent of which went to our neighbours in CARICOM and the remainder to extra regional sources. The employment sector, 10 731 contributed as well to the general contribution of this sector to the economy.

Sir, one of the grand claims or one of the factors of the economy of our economic performance, which was ignored by the Honourable Member for St. John, relates to the matter of our credit rating. He dismissed that as being of no importance or of no consequence but he knows, Sir, that if Barbados had the credit rating in 1993, which it has today, that when the former Prime Minister and when he, as Minister of Finance, were traveling around the world, knocking on doors here and there trying to raise finances to save this economy they would not have had any problems ...

Aside.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

The Honourable Member for St. John, Sir, as Minister of Finance...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on point of order.

The Honourable Member is obviously not speaking from the facts. In fact, for the entire morning, he has been a bit off-course and I want to put him on track with this one. In 1993 the Democratic Labour Party was able to raise finances on the international capital market ...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Brought an issue of \$50 million dollars ...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

We came down \$20 million.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

But if something was wrong with the terms why did you draw down \$20 million?

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

We drew down \$20 million, you came and by December of the following year, drew down the balance of it. If the terms were not favorable then you could have abandoned it, so you cannot speak with a forked tongue on this issue. You have to be clear about what you are going to tell Honourable Members in this Chamber.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be diverted, I am quite clear that Barbados' credit rating has allowed Barbados, first of all, to have access to finances that it did not previously had and allowed Barbados to be able to get finance on decent terms, rather than on terms which could only be described in the good biblical language as usury. The terms were so terrible, that only loan sharks would have wanted to deal with Barbados at that time, Sir.

Sir, the fact of the matter is that Barbados finds itself in a position where rather than being rewarded by the International Financial Institutions for a good performance, finds itself being graduated, being cut off from access to aid where many years ago, and indeed for some of the poor countries in the world, access to World Bank financing, access to financing by the Inter-American Development Bank, access to financing by way of country to country loans, in what is called Official Development Assistance (ODA), all of these things were available to us and now they are no longer available.

In fact, the Inter-American Development Bank, which had been the last international financing institution with major financing for projects in Barbados, there are currently discussions going on within the corridors of the IADB about graduation for countries like Barbados and the Bahamas. They believe that we have done too well, that we no longer should be eligible for financing under generous IADB terms.

Therefore, in order for Barbados to appropriately finance infrastructural and other projects, it would have to look towards two principal sources: the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the International Commercial Markets (ICM). One would not be able to get good rates on the International Commercial Market without having commercial grade credit rating, so that ratings by Moodys and Standard and Poor's of a BAA2, spoken in the jargon as BAA2, an A-minus, constitute commercial grade rating. Very few countries in the world have a rating such as this. What this means, Sir, is that independent observers with no political axe to grind, who are not trying to depose and replace the Minister of Finance and whose vision is not obscured by cataract or ambition, make an assessment of the economic performance of Barbados and decide what they are going to do from there.

Sir, the Honourable Member also made one or two charges and I will just deal with them before the time goes, Sir. The Honourable Member in speaking about the social partnership sought to go down a

road in which he suggested the social partnership had failed in attaining its objectives, that the social partnership had not, in fact, worked in the interest of the workers of Barbados and that...

Aside.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

I know of what I speak. The Honourable Member also knows that the social partnership has been one of the principal contributors to economic and social stability in Barbados. It provides a platform for consultation between the Government, the private sector and the workers of Barbados on a major social and economic policy.

10:20 a.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

All three sides, Sir, ...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I hate to interrupt the Honourable Member for Christ Church East but I would like to point out that he is misleading the House. I was very careful to confine my remarks yesterday, not to what my view of the social partnership was. I confined my remarks to what the Leader of the Trade Union Movement said about the Social Partnership and about the Honourable Member for Christ Church East by extension. Therefore, Sir, I think rather than worry about me, the Honourable Member should focus on responding to the man who sits with him to negotiate and consult on issues.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, unlike the Honourable Member for St. John, yes, I sit with the social partners and I know what they say. In our review of Protocol 3, as we embarked on putting in place Protocol 4, part of the process involved a very frank and open peer review. Each social partner reviewed the performance of the other two against the criteria that has been established in the social partnership document itself. Sir, all three partners agreed that the social partnership had been a success. They however noted a number of concerns and there were enough concerns to go around.

The point that the Leader of the Trade Union Movement made, which the Honourable Member for St. John, like a drunken man hoping for a piece of wet straw to clutch onto or hoping to blow into a life boat, was that whilst at the level of the upper layer of the social partnership we had a very good understanding and an appreciation of what was involved, there were no major issues of action or substance that there were problems at the enterprise level and at the operation level and that is a fact.

In the Government service, we would have instances where there will be managers of departments who will act precipitously and sometimes in breach of the tenets of the social partnership.

In the Trade Union Movement, Sir, all of us know that we have had many instances in which wildcat strikes and other illegal work stoppages have occurred in breach of the social partnership and these matters had not been referred to the Labour Department. The leadership of the unions themselves had to go in to save the workers, indicating, for example, that this is in breach, you need to follow the procedure.

In the private sector, you will have breaches of procedure as well. One of the things that all three of us agreed was that in the next Social Partnership, we needed to work a lot harder to ensure that the understandings that we had achieved at the upper level, were filtered right through to our constituents, in the Government, in the Trade Union Movement and in the private sector. That, Sir, was not a condemnation of practices by the Government.

In fact, Sir, under this administration, the workers in the public service have been able to benefit from several of the things. First of all, the 5 000 workers who for many years, some for 20 years, some for 30 years, had been considered casual workers, whose principal term of employment was that they could be dismissed on a day's notice, were put in a position, where by having their posts converted to that of public officers, they were able to have appointments under the terms and conditions as employed by permanent secretaries and other persons appointed under the Civil Establishments Order and appointed by Instrument by the Governor-General.

That is of no little significance to them, Sir, because they have all had the experience of going to the bank and not being able to have access to the loans that they required because they could not show that they would have a job in the long term. Apart from that, Sir, over 1 400 persons have received first appointment to posts that were vacant in the public service. Under the Democratic Labour Party administration, Sir, there were a large number of posts that were not filled. The post existed, they were persons acting in them and no one was appointed. I do not have to make mention, Sir, of the fact that under this administration as well, there have been wage increases granted at each and every wage negotiation, the last ones being 4 per cent and 2½ per cent.

Whilst these Estimates, Sir, cannot insert a figure because the negotiations have not been completed, the Minister of Finance in his planning has already taken account of the fact that there will be wage negotiations going on this year and, therefore, there needs to be financial room in order to grant the workers the wage increases that they deserve. The workers in Barbados have a better deal, better conditions of service with the Government acting more as a model employer than under previous times.

Not that everything is perfect, Sir, because at the level of the line managers, at the level of individual departments, whether it be in Government, in the private sector or in the union itself as an employer, you will have individuals going off "half-a-" and acting in a way which may breach the rules of the department, which may breach the social partnership but it does not take away from the fact, Sir, of the fundamental commitment to good employment practices by the Government as an employer.

Sir, these Estimates as presented, represent a recognition by the Government of the need to create the environment for competitiveness, of the need, Sir, to commit additional resources to a number of social issues, be it crime, be it poverty, be it the inclusion of some of the groups which are on the fringe of the society, as well, Sir, as ensuring that public services and especially public infrastructure are adequately provided for.

Sir, the fact that we have been able to so prudently manage your finances, that we are able to make provisions for expansions of the airport, road works, Government buildings, vending facilities, all of which we will hear about during the detailed discussion of the Heads, indicate, Sir, an excellent balance between having adequate revenue to finance these activities and how we split our expenditure under the various Heads.

Sir, one comment I want to make on the revenue side is that we have many calls from time to time from persons in the society, including the private sector, for everything from a reduction in taxes to an increase in services. But I want, Sir, to join with those who are concerned about the level of arrears which exist to various Government departments - \$134 million to National Insurance Department, \$179 million to other revenue agencies.

In fact, in my Ministry, Sir, there are persons who have been renting industrial space from the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation who have run up debts somewhere in the region of \$4 million. This comes against a background of there being two debt rescheduling programmes in 1995 and 1998. Under those programmes, Sir, we made provision for there to be a moratorium on debt repayment for a two-year period. We made provision for a write-off in some cases of up to 40 per cent or 50 per cent of the arrears. We made provision for a reduction of interest and penalties. We made provision for a rescheduling of the rates and repayment.

Sir, clearly we have to act in the public's interest. I must say that a number of the companies were able to restructure and become current but sooner rather than later, action will need to be taken against those companies that have still refused to pay.

10:30 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

The reality is that with a limited commodity, such as space for industrial production, while we are keeping some person in the space who have refused to pay even after these amnesties, there would be persons who are hoping to get their projects off the ground, who are hoping to go into larger and more accommodating space for their production but who are being denied that opportunity because of persons who will not pay.

Certainly, while it is the Government's wish and desire to provide every accommodation for the business sector in Barbados, it is also the Government's responsibility to ensure that the business sector makes its fair and just contribution to the provision of those facilities. So that in the not too distant future when government departments, including the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation, are required to take what action is necessary to protect the public's purse I hope that persons will understand the background against which that has occurred and that it is not a whimsical or harsh action. In the case certainly of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation and indeed the other revenues department of Government, these actions are taken after at least two opportunities to

restructure and to take and make some effort to reduce the indebtedness to Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these Estimates on the expenditure side makes provision for a number of services which impact on the ordinary man. The Opposition, when the economy is good, will claim that the economy is not important and that it is not a point to debate but then they will say that not enough provision has been made for social services. This year they can say neither. The economy is going well and the Estimates have made more than adequate provision for social services.

I look forward to the debate of the Heads for the ministries that provide social services so that I can speak in more detail on it with the time that is available to me. I can identify and give thanks for the services that have been provided to the people of my constituency, Christ Church East, and I am sure that that story is replicated all around the various constituencies. From the provision to accelerate roads in our constituencies, from the increases provision to provide street lights in our constituencies, for the increased provision to accelerate the housing programme in our constituencies, from the increased provision and the streamlining of the provision of welfare assistance to the indigent, these are the things that touch the lives of ordinary Barbadians.

Sir, I am pleased to note that these Estimates speak to an acceleration of a housing programme. Particularly referenced in the proposals of the Ministry of Housing and Lands are greater public/private sector joint venture solutions to housing in Barbados.

These Estimates also speak to the commitment of a greater share of public resources to the fight against crime and disorder in the society. There are greater sums provided to help the health sector. I must in conclusion, make the point that the Government is not the only actor in this attempt to improve the society and to take us in the direction of having what the Honourable Member for St. George South refers to as 'the good society' which is a term I believe is used by Galbraith.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

In conclusion, I want to make the point that there are a number of other social issues which the Government wants to work on with the wider members of the society. For example, one of the things that, with all the best will in the world and with all of the provisions of resources, the Government itself will not be able to address without the help of the wider society is the whole manner of a gender issue which is developing, that is, the position of our young men.

The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture has made provision for enhanced opportunities in tertiary education.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, could you please wind up?

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

However, it is interesting to note that while in the secondary school system there are equal number of males and females, at the tertiary level, for example, at the Barbados Community College (BCC), more females are availing themselves of the opportunity. In fact, two-thirds of the student population at the

Barbados Community College are females. We need, Sir, to bring the other members of the society on board to help us in our desire to help the young men of Barbados to take advantage of these opportunities.

Sir, in conclusion, this Appropriation Bill 2001/2002 addresses a wide range of social and economic issues. The Government, however, needs the support of each and every member of the society. It cannot be left to the responsibility of Government alone but the Government together with the wider members of the society will address these issues.

I look forward, Sir, to expanding on them in the community stage of this Bill.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to give my very, very strong support to the Estimates, which have been laid in this House and to support and endorse the speaker on this side who has spoken today.

The reality is that we find ourselves in the year 2001 in Barbados at a juncture where there is a recognition that almost every facet of human endeavour requires substantial review and reform in this economy and in this society. In a very real sense that is the mission that this Government has been embarked upon over the course of the last six years and in the context of all that we would wish to do, there can be no success without a strong and stable economy.

I want to spend a few minutes dealing with that because we really have come to a stage in Barbados where, I believe, a lot of people have taken for granted what it has taken for us to move in to eight strong years of economic growth in spite of the challenges that we are facing domestically, regionally and internationally.

We have had a situation where over the course of the last 18 months or so there has been such tremendous volatility in oil prices across the globe that other countries have had serious challenges in respect of how to maintain strong fiscal positions. In Barbados, in spite of the volatility in oil prices, we have managed to maintain economic growth and keep inflation down to a manageable level. Last year, inflation was 2.4 per cent and the year before it was somewhere between 1.5 to 2 per cent. We have managed to keep all of this in spite of the fact that one of the main factors of production, the utility cost, has so escalated in our midst.

Sir, I do not know if persons have truly recognised the effective management of this economy in respect of the challenges like that volatility in oil prices and the trade liberalization process where we have been committed to a process of the replacement of all non-tariff barriers by tariffs with the bond rate, et cetera, and a further commitment to the reduction of those tariffs over a period of time such that those products some of which may previously have been produced or are being produced locally may face competition from other countries where their factors and their costs of production are much lower and, therefore, where persons within the market may be more likely to buy those alternative products rather than the ones being produced locally.

10:40 a.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

You have just heard the Minister of Industry speak to the fact that the doom and gloom predicted for the manufacturing sector has not fully come to fruition, but the reality is that that sector is facing serious challenges. Equally, the agricultural sector continues to face challenges and, indeed, the reduction in poultry production last year is an indication as to how that sector is struggling to survive in the context of liberalized markets.

We believe that in spite of all of that, the mere fact that this economy could grow by three per cent and the growth was led by the trading sectors, by tourism, by sugar, by the international business sector, is indicative that this Government and, in particular, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, has continued a very responsible and prudent role in respect of the management of the economy.

I want to say, Sir, that it is impossible for us to achieve the things to create social justice and a good society without a strong and stable economy. We have in the face of the volatility of oil prices, trade liberalization, the threat from the OECD, the prospect of a downturn in the United States economy, in spite of all of these challenges, we have continued to manage the ship safely through turbulent waters.

Indeed, Sir, as I said in another place on Sunday, were this an issue, you could bet that the Opposition would have been making it a central platform in their debate. Indeed, listening to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, his issues related more to matters pertaining to distribution as opposed to the performance of the economy in respect of those things with which he had a difficulty.

It is a good thing, therefore, that in the context of an Estimates debate 2001, the actual performance of the economy remains undisputed in respect of the soundness of the macro economic fundamentals, Sir.

I want to congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for continuing to manage well and to inspire confidence in this economy. What are some of the indices of confidence, Sir? You heard that there is an increased level of participation in terms of the employment statistics in this country. It is significant that while the adult population only grew by 1 500, those choosing to enter the workforce grew by 5 600, almost four times the rate of growth of the adult population.

Persons participate in an economy by contributing to a society when they feel confident, when they feel they have something to offer. It is without a doubt that that index in respect of the growth of the participation rate carrying us to one of the highest anywhere in the developing world and among the highest in the developed world, is an indication of how the average Barbadian feels about the management of the economy and the society within which he or she lives.

Equally, Sir, we continue to have significant private inflows in respect of foreign investment and there were over \$309 million brought into the country last year in respect of tourism related and public utilities related projects. Persons would not be bringing money into this economy to invest if they did not believe that they could realise a return from their investment.

It is an index of the confidence that those other persons who are not Barbadians, who have no loyalty to this country, feel that their investments can receive a good return if invested in these shores. It is significant that at the national level there is virtually little or no debate as to the management of the economy.

For a country of this size, with the limited resources that we have, Sir, to have reached a point where the national debate through the media, through the academic circles, does not include any debate as to the structure and the type of economic growth that we are experiencing, that is a significant statement of confidence in the performance of this country.

I want to make the point, and I started by saying, that there were a number of areas in which we as a country had to experience significant reform and review. Indeed, Sir, we have been working towards this over the last six years and it is important that persons see this as a continuum. We have, as you know, been trying to lay the basis for a new economy. We have introduced the legislation for a Fair Trading Commission because we recognise that the smallness of our society requires us to be able to put in place the structures for a virtual market, largely because the size of the market is not large enough to cause any self regulation in an effective way and to bring social justice to the people of this country.

Equally, we have put in place a framework for small business development. We have also put in place a framework for the development of the capital markets. There has been significant tax reform so much so that in spite of the fact that we have had such substantial tax reform, it has not led once again to a great deal of debate because of the smooth way in which it was managed by the Ministry of Finance and we have seen the replacement of a number of indirect taxes with a single value added tax, which is calculated to broaden the base of those who pay taxes in this country rather than having it concentrated on a few who were paying either through income tax or the production or importation of goods.

The services economy, given the fact that that is the direction in which this economy has truly gone, has now been properly brought within the purview of the tax structure by the introduction of the value added tax system. So there has been tax reform as well.

Equally, Sir, we have before the House, already read a first time the new Securities Bill, which speaks to the further development of the capital markets because we recognise that any talk of economic enfranchisement would be a nonsense unless we give Barbadians the real opportunity to participate in the creation of wealth through the publicly owned and traded companies in Barbados and others from the Caribbean that choose to live here.

It is the hope that by creating forms of financing for them which are equity based that they would have an opportunity to be able to spread into the wider Caribbean in terms of expansion policies rather than concentrating within the limited size of this market.

Sir, we have also had the opportunity to see reform in terms of the preparation of legislation for banking and insolvency because part and parcel of the creation of wealth in the economy must come from the micro level and looking at how entrepreneurs create wealth. One of the things that we have to fight is a culture that says that because you fail in a business you are either a thief or a write-off and you should never have an opportunity to participate in a business activity again. This is something that for

too long, particularly black Barbadians, have imposed on themselves by passing critical judgments on other persons without understanding what fully may have contributed to the losses incurred in a business.

Sir, we believe, therefore, that there must be an adequate framework which allows people to have other chances in respect of the participation in businesses and the creation of wealth in this country, that banking and insolvency legislation will be critical.

Sir, you have seen essentially a number of measures being introduced over a process of time to create a new economy. There has been a considerable amount of talk on the part of this Government trying to persuade Barbadians that we must increase the level of savings. In a very real sense, the level of savings that we are able to generate will also help finance the expansion in the economy both at the macro level and at the micro level.

10:50 a.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Indeed, Sir, I was glad to read in the Press Release of January 31, 2001, sent out by the Central Bank of Barbados that there was, in fact, a reduction in the rate of growth of consumer imports. Not that it did not grow but the rate of growth was only 1.50 per cent as compared with previous years. Sir, I hope that is an indication of the Barbadian public understanding that if there is surplus income that it should go into the creation of savings and investment rather than simply buying consumer imports like televisions, cars, radios or whatever kind of consumer imports that we buy in order to live well.

One of the jokes that is told against black people is that they do not like to save or invest and they like to buy things that are patently showpieces. Sir, I want to believe that is not a statement that is applicable to us as an ethnic group. I believe that we have shown in the last few years through the taking up of a lot of incentives in respect of generating savings, whether in registered retirement savings plans, the purchase of new shares or in savings in the credit union that we have the ability to help finance our own development by reason of the collective savings of individual Barbadians. Sir, that is in respect of the foundation for the new economy but it does not stop there. It is happening in almost every facet of human endeavour as well.

We have embarked on significant reform in the educational sector because we recognise that unless we prepare Barbadians to be able to accept the jobs of the new economy that we are going to be in trouble. No longer is it appropriate for a young girl to feel that she can leave school and go down by the Harbour or Grazzettes Industrial Estates and pick up a job working in a garment firm because those options are restricted.

Indeed, Sir, more and more of the job opportunities that are available to young men and women relate to their capacity to be able to analyse, use their initiative and be able to do those things that will require a sound primary and secondary education.

Sir, we have heard it over and over to the point where I think we hear it without realising the substance of what we say, that you will not be able to keep the same job throughout life in the context of this new economy. It is a reality and we have to recognise that we cannot just wake up tomorrow morning and be ready for it.

Education reform, in case the Senator for the Democratic Labour Party from the other place does not realise it, is not something that happens overnight. The minimum time period in which you can expect returns in education reform is seven to ten years. If a policy is introduced today, you have to give that policy seven to ten years to work itself through a generation in order to appropriately deem its effectiveness in respect of the population you intend it to benefit.

Sir, when you listen to the Opposition you would get the impression that the 9.3 per cent in unemployment that we have managed to reduce it to has, been obtained purely by expansion with the public sector. The Central Bank of Barbados reported that the low male unemployment rate was primarily due to increased employment in the service industry while the decrease in the female category was occasioned by greater working opportunities in manufacturing and the wholesale and retail sectors.

Sir, there is independent evidence as to the fact that the continued creation of jobs is not coming at the expense of the public sector but is coming within the other aspects of the economy and that it is likely, therefore, not to have an impact on Government's wages bill or to throw the whole role of Government into a lopsided effect as we saw in 1990/91, which triggered the economic downturn and the layoffs that we saw at that time and, indeed, the financing of that deficit by the Central Bank of Barbados in respect of the inability to have that deficit maintain on a long term basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was speaking about the need for educational reform. There is absolutely no doubt in our minds that what we are doing in terms of trying to improve how many children benefit from the system is absolutely critical, which is what EduTech 2000 is about and to do so, we are employing a number of different strategies.

We believe that we must change how we teach, what we teach and how we test. Hence, the curriculum reforms that you see being discussed all over the country. In those circumstances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we feel that in so restructuring and reforming the education system that in ten to fifteen years we will have a population that is better prepared for participation in the new economy.

Sir, it is not only education, it is also health. We feel that there must be substantial reform in the health sector at this stage.

We have a hospital that was built in 1966 dealing with a different profile of Barbadian in terms of the kind of health problem that they experience. We had Barbadians who, because they were still coming out of an agricultural-based society, were largely far more active and their diet was different but we now have a population where some of the major causes of death all relate to chronic and communicable

diseases as well as things relating to road accidents and violence which are, in fact, the main causes of death among young Barbadians under thirty years old. We have a hospital that was not designed to deal with those kinds of problems that are now presenting themselves in respect of the profile of our population.

It stands to reason that you cannot simply change one or two things but that there must be substantial reform of the health sector if we are to meet the needs of the early 21st century in respect of the Barbadian that we have.

Sir, the same stands for justice. The Attorney-General is now about to carry before the IADB Board a modernisation of justice programme recognising that there is a total different profile of criminal activity, that the eight magisterial districts set up in 1956, at a time when there was no drug craze in Barbados and very few aggravated robbery or burglary, that those eight magisterial districts cannot suffice today. There has to be an expansion of the jurisdiction of the magisterial districts as well because both in the criminal and civil area you need to be able to take some of the pressure off the High Court system just as how the polyclinics take some of the pressure off your central hospital and in so doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be able to ensure that there is a quicker return in respect of the administration of justice.

Sir, in the 60's, I am told that the longest period for an adjournment was two weeks and if you got a two-week adjournment that was considered to be long. We are now in a Barbados where, if you get a four-month adjournment you are considered to have done well.

There has to be fundamental reform of the justice system, as well as the police and prison departments if we are to meet the new profile that the society is developing in respect of the administration of justice.

Equally, Sir, the same with labour legislation. We have a Barbados where there is a lot more fluidity of movement in respect of labour and we have to recognise that for us to sustain the growth and the development of the new economy there must be commensurate action in respect of the legislative framework for the creation and modifying of our labour market.

Indeed, Sir, I am happy that the Minister of Labour has consulted with stakeholders on most of the major labour legislation that will come before this Parliament. It is critical that we have this legislation through consultation because you cannot expect to change fundamental aspects of your labour market system without giving the other people who have a vested interest in it an opportunity to be able to at least give their views even if at the end of the day we do not agree with them.

11:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. M. A. MOTLEY:

We are not talking about a ghost document or a phantom document. I suppose that we will have the criticisms until you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, say that this is now cited as the Employment Protection Act,

whenever that time comes, in spite of the fact that we know the resistance of the consultative process.

Sir, we also have to look at our road network. In the late 1970's the then Barbados Labour Party administration recognised that there needed to be serious reform and the restructuring of the road network and, indeed, there were pillories to the building of the ABC Highway. There is not a person in Barbados today who could imagine what life would be like without the ABC Highway being there to reduce the pressure from the old traditional highways that we had.

Sir, all of the major projects that have been designed to bring about a change in the development and an improvement in the quality of life have been the subject of major dispute and controversy. We say, Sir, that is perhaps the price that you pay in respect of bringing development.

There is no doubt in our minds, Sir, that there must be a substantial restructuring and reworking of the road network in Barbados and the Minister of Transport has been working assiduously at policies aimed to reduce traffic congestion, while at the same time ensuring the integrity of the road network. The mere fact that \$57 million will be spent in this financial year alone on shoring up and improving the quality of the roads in Barbados, is indicative of this Government's commitment to ensuring that cars are not damaged by reason of the pot holes in the road or other things.

Sir, I can go on and on and talk about all the various things in the economy to simply say that the Government is the one who recognises that we need to create the policy legislative and fiscal environment for the restructuring, changing and reforming of the whole economy and society. There must be a national buy-in on the part of every interest group and on the part of every element of the society and economy for us to be successful as a nation.

We have a legacy of which we can be justly proud. When you build a big house, Sir, if you do not maintain it, it would crumble. No matter how much money you spent to build it you still have to spend a little piece of change all the time. Equally, if you have as rich a legacy as we have, if we have the reform measures and justice in education and health in terms of the new development of the new economy, if we do not bring along Barbadians with those reform measures we would not survive in the 21st Century or maintain the status of being among the top developing countries in the world or becoming a developed country.

The private sector of this country, Sir, have had enough time - in fairness I am going to remove myself from partisan political lines because I know that when the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance, and before, people have been speaking to the private sector of this country in respect of the fact that they have to change their ethos in respect of how they do business and how they acquire new business in the context of a liberalised environment.

For a full decade, Sir, we have been appealing to the private sector to do so. I am not trying to curse the private sector but I am merely saying that we have intangible evidence in respect of how the Trinidadian manufacturing sector turned around. Trinidad in the mid 1980's was going through major hell and Trinidad retooled, their manufacturers, developed a new ethos and by the early 1990's the profile of development and success was returning to the Trinidadian manufacturing sector.

Sir, I want to give you a local example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have entertainment artistes in this

country who in the mid 1990's, a decade ago, used to walk about performing at hotels in the country if they could get jobs. Do you know, Sir, that the nucleus of our entertainment sector, small though it is in relative terms but providing employment for at least 150 people and predominantly youth employment, that they spend three quarters of the year outside of Barbados earning foreign exchange because they got up off their backsides and recognised that they could not continue playing to the same market night after night, if not the length of time in terms of their marketability in this market would be considerably reduced.

It is not a new ethos. The Merrymen laid the foundation for it. They survived for 30 years because they recognised that they had to leave Barbados and perform. I am saying that the export of services and the ethos that has been developed in respect of that export of services is the kind of ethos that we should be seeing coming out of the private sector.

We should not be hearing from the chicken producers what we can do to protect the poultry industry. They must be able to tell us what are the exceptions under the WTO rules. We should not be hearing from manufacturers that they only want us to continue to expand their levels of protectionism. We must be hearing from them what we can do to give them assistance to make them more competitive and to move them into other islands whether it be Chefette, manufacturing food or other manufacturers.

I want to come to the Ministry of Education before I finish, Sir. The Prime Minister indicated that there are forces out there who would want us to begin to look at the issue of the charging of tuition fees at university level in this country.

Sir, Barbados' development has reached where it has reached because of our commitment to social justice. I believe, Sir, that we would be betraying the basic fundamental ordinances that have made this society what it is, if we were now to say to people that they must be responsible for those things. We as a people have collectively understood that Government has a responsibility to provide for certain services. That does not mean, however, that the nationalisation of responsibility must take place in every area and that parents or communities can abandon the responsibilities in respect of their children.

We accept and we want to maintain the duty of providing tertiary tuition fees, although the cost is rising, but we say that they may be other elements that parents and individuals will have to pick up on their own in respect of the recreational activities, guild fees, books or those other things which help to make the university experience what it is.

In respect the EduTech programme, I want to say very quickly that while I have heard the Prime Minister in respect of the slowing down of which he has spoken, I, like the Leader of the Opposition, feel that there is really an urgency in respect of us being able to contain the programme as a whole in seven years.

I believe, Sir, that my Ministry with the Ministry of Finance will be meeting to do all things including looking at aspects of the Civil Works Programme to see how we can do that, because at the end of the day EduTech is not a Civil Works Programme. It is a programme to change how we teach and how we learn. In those circumstances, along with the suggestions given by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy last week as to how we should deal with the St. Lucy plan, I believe that there may be ways that we may be able to deal effectively with the cost.

There is an attitude out there on the part of contractors and design consultants that if the Government is paying we are going to gouge out their eyes.

11:10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

I want to say to you, Sir, that the Ministry of Education will not be tolerating such activity.

Indeed, one of the things that we regret is that there has been so few bids by contractors in this country who we know can do the work but who feel intimidated by two or three inches of paperwork that they get in respect of being able to participate in a project funded by the IADB or the CDB.

The reality is, Sir, there is obviously the opportunity out there for other persons to work together with small contractors to help them do some of that administrative work, whether the Small Business Association or the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme who have an administrative, management or quantity surveying background, who can do the paper work. I know, Sir, from our domestic and primary education programme that a lot of the carpenters, masons, painters and small contractors can do the work and can do it much cheaper, but we have allowed a firm whose core work is not construction and not based in Barbados to come into Barbados, put together a group of small contractors and then bid. And do you know Sir, that they were the only firm tendering, so we did not even have a choice. So that there are two levels of profits, because they obviously have to subcontract to the real people and then you have to pay them. So you are paying two levels of profits, when in truth and in fact you should be paying only one, but there has been a reluctance on the part of small contractors.

We have just had an open meeting to all small contractors last Saturday, in the hope that for the rest of the programme we could encourage people to bid and to become more competitive.

I want to say Sir, that our primary domestic education programme is one of the few programmes in the country that can truly be called an economic and affirmative-action programme because we really do work and give the benefit to small contractors, but we could do it only if it is financed exclusively by the Government of Barbados we can do it. When we are receiving financing from the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank we have to comply with their rules and their forms, but I hope that we could encourage people in order to help them out.

Sir, I want to support these Estimates and to say that I truly anticipate that this will lead to the betterment of the standard of living of all Barbadians, not at the end of this year but as part of the continued initiative of this Government. I thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to add my endorsement to this year's Estimate Debates.

Sir, let me first of all say what a privilege to add these words, particularly, Sir, being the steward for the Ministry for Tourism and International Transport.

First of all, these Estimates this year must be seen and must be placed within the context of the future socio-economic development for our nation and must be judged in the way in which they fit the social and economic progress of our country in the face of mounting regional and global challenges.

As the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said yesterday these Estimate Debates are placed in the mode of being expansionary to the Barbados economy over a number of years.

Sir, I am also happy to be associated with the progress that has been made in the Barbados economy over the past 8 years and into this 9th year. As the Minister of Finance said not only have we been able to produce Estimates that speak to the expansion of the economy but to build on what has been done so far in the last 8 years in terms of restoring stability to the Barbadian economy during the first two years and then being able to build the capacity both at social and economic levels and what we should see for Barbados in the future. Sir, these Estimates lay the foundation for a 9th year of unprecedented growth and then into the 10th year for Barbados.

The Estimates also speak of an issue of being able to create an economic stability in a climate of regional and international productivity. Sir, whether or not those on the other side seem or want to accept this, the issue of how we have been able to be proper stewards of the economy at the macro-level, being able to keep the deficit low, low inflation, strong balance of payment position, there is little more that you can do at the macro-level, given this and therefore, what we have to do is to look at how we at the micro-level can continue to manage all these aspects of the Barbadian economy.

Sir, I am well aware of how important tourism is to our existence. I am very, very well aware of how a positive tourism performance is vital to sustain and improve socio-economic development for our country.

Sir, last year's tourism performance contributed handsomely to the economy's positive performance, to the highest level of net international reserves that we have ever had in our country since recorded time and the lowest level of unemployment since we have been keeping published data. Unlike the previous three years, however, when the non-trading sectors led economic expansion, in 2000 the performance was driven by improved performances in both the sugar and tourism industries with the trading sectors accounting for 5.2 per cent improvement and the non-trading sectors with 3 per cent. In 1999, tourism declined by 1.5 per cent, but I am please to report that in the year 2000 tourism bounced back to record 8.0 per cent growth.

Aside.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

I will ignore the asides, Sir. The growth that has been taking place in the economy has been taking place in a climate ... I will return to tourism and what tourism has been doing and why it has provided

the base for our improved economy over the past year. Sir, the issue is we are now dealing with a climate in which the economy is now contracting in the face of the OECD pressure, in the face of uncertainty about agricultural prices and about oil prices, the issue of creating a true regional economy; the issue of globalisation.

Sir, within that entire state of productivity we have been trying to keep the economy stable whilst building upon what we have put together in the last six years and being able to create a base for even more economic expansion into the future.

Sir, these Estimates, however, have to be set in the context of expansion, of progress and of growth but Sir, I want to warn, and the Prime Minister warned yesterday, that this climate of contentment that we are seeing in Barbados can also result in a climate of complacency for Barbadians. I think Barbadians have become accustomed to constant years of growth over the past 8 years but we should not take these issues for granted because around us there is still a very uncertain world. We must, therefore, continue on the path that we have put together over these past 6 to 8 years to be able to continue this growth.

These Estimates, Sir, are also set in a mode of creating increased social capital for our country and I believe that it is important that we balance the issue of economic growth with being able to build more social capital to our people. Much has been spent and much has been provided in the Estimates to deal with the fundamental issues that seem to bother us and it is really distorting the entire community about where Barbados is going.

11:20 a.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Sir, I speak to the issue of creating a stable climate for law and order. The issue is that whenever we speak about these issues of crime or law and order in our society, it becomes a very emotive issue and I believe that people are losing a sense of what is really happening across Barbados.

The Attorney-General has produced statistics to prove what is happening across Barbados. When we say that the economy is growing by 3 per cent or that Central Bank says the economy is down, or that sugar production is down or that tourists arrivals are down, we all believe that. When we report in Barbados that the overall levels of crime are down but that there are pockets of concern across the island with specific types of crime and in specific geographical areas of our country, people totally ignore that to the extent that people will tell you that crime is up.

Sir, over the years, the statistics have proven that the level of overall crime in Barbados is down. Sir, I believe that as Minister of Tourism, that should be fundamentally important first and foremost to Barbadians and then to tourism.

It is obviously important, in terms of the type of grandeur elements we are trying to create in tourism that safety and security are high on the list. Therefore, Sir, it is of serious concern to us that crime, generally in the country and crime against visitors specifically, continue to be down and that we create the safest environment possible for the tourism sector to thrive and to survive.

Sir, over the years, what has happened is that people continue to distort the facts but the fact is clear that overall crime in this country has been very well controlled. The statistics are there for all to see in the first Crime Bulletin.

Sir, I speak to the issue of continuing to build social capital and the provision that has been made in terms of the social services. Sir, the Prime Minister spoke extensively about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and where we are going in terms of providing the best health services for our people. These issues occupy the minds of Members on this side and is seriously on the front burner.

Sir, I now speak to the issue of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and what has been provided in our own Estimates to deal with this disease, which can destroy the very fabric of our young people who are the most productive members of our society. Again, what has been provided should hearten anyone who is interested in the development of our country.

Sir, on the issue of building greater communities in our society, provision has been made in these Estimates to be able to continue the work that we have been doing in terms of building better, more cohesive communities in our society.

Sir, we believe that we build strong nations through building strong communities and these Estimates have a balance to them because we are not just changing computers in Community Centres but we are doing the work where people are able to say, for the first time, that we are to creating physical facilities and better community activities in a way that will bring them together.

Sir, we are also setting aside continued resources to be able to deal with those at the lower end of our society to bring up the ones who have fallen through the cracks. The issue of what the Ministry of Social Transformation has been doing - whether or not the Leader of the Opposition believes that enough has been provided in terms of the Urban and Rural Development programmes and in terms of poor people who were never looked after in this way under their administration - these people for the first time have been able to proudly say, whether old men or old women who have made their contribution to the development of this country, that they can live in proper facilities or they can have water toilets. These are issues that are fundamental to those people.

When we are finished with all the partisan politics and all of the jumping up and down, the issues are how we have touched the lives of each and every individual Barbadian, how have we been able to provide for those substantially that cannot provide for themselves, how are we able to provide for those who have slipped through the cracks. Sir, this administration stands on a very proud record of being able to provide for the first time in the history of this nation, an administration and a ministry that seek to look after those who have slipped through the tracks and who may not have had an equal opportunity to some in this room.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Sir, the issue is that we have been able for the first time to provide for Barbadians, a ministry that seems to be able to deal with those most vulnerable in our society. The greatest societies in the world are those who can look after the people who are most vulnerable in the best possible way. Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation and what it has been providing obviously has done a great deal in looking after these people.

Sir, concerning the issue of being able to provide concrete roads, there are places in my constituency where people would not believe that in the year 2001, people are living in those kinds of conditions. Sir, there are mud roads and tracks that we are now seeking to put a little tar on. The issue of people still living without water-borne toilets, is a serious one in Barbados today.

Again, we know most of urban Barbados was formerly represented by the Democratic Labour Party. We know of the strongholds they had, which they have lost because at the end of the day, people might not see with the naked eye, what has been done to help those at the bottom of the ladder.

The issue of providing playing fields and recreational facilities in every community is a serious ideal for Barbadians - being able to create a community in which there are recreational facilities, in which there are places for people to go, particularly, Sir, in a society that is evolving in the way in which Barbados is evolving.

Sir, statistics actually show that those who get involved in crime, particularly during their teenage years are those with little supervision between the time they leave school and the time their parents come home from work. Sir, what we are seeing is a society in which more people are actually working and which more people are coming home later and later. The issue is, Sir, how do you create a community base, how do you bring back to Barbadians the issue of family and the issue of the community, to a stage where children will now have someone to supervise and look after them in the most vulnerable time between the time that they leave school and the time that their parents come home from work. That is the time when children are prone to get themselves in some strange activity.

Sir, when you are able to build stronger communities and you are able to bring back a sense of parental guidance, whether it is outside or direct parental guidance, to those children who have left school is a major issue.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

I have no problem with the Leader of the Opposition because he has gone out and talked about families first and I endorse his sentiments because he is able to create, Sir, for Barbados, a family environment that will bring back to Barbados what we had in the past. This has been able to build a base for us, where we are now going and which we have been able to construct all of the social services and construct this strong economy of which we speak.

The other issue, Sir, is the continued investment in education in Barbados and particularly, we have been able to create a base, not only, Sir, for education and for improved education facilities but for us to

focus fundamentally on what we have felt in the Ministry of Culture and that is how we have legitimately created employment for people who before, would not have been considered as legitimate professionals in our society.

The Minister of Culture spoke to the issue of artistes plying their trades and how sportsmen now become legitimate professionals in our society. Sir, this is another issue that has been on the back burner for a long time but in a globalized world, the issue is how you are able to create for yourself absolute advantages, that is, people who can ply their trades anywhere in the world, people who can cross national boundaries, sovereign individuals rather than sovereign states in terms of people plying their trades across boundaries.

11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

The artistes and the sportsmen that we have in our country will be the ones who will be the true professionals of the twenty-first century.

I am happy to be associated with an administration that has been able to provide resources, more than have ever been provided, for continued investment in the education of our people and also that has put culture on the front burner as a legitimate tool of national and socioeconomic development and to be able to say for the first time that culture continues to be a legitimate profession. The cultural activities, the issue of sports ...

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

You did not start it. You were going to close down the National Cultural Foundation when you were there.

Anyway, Sir, I am very well aware of how tourism and tourism development have been able to finance most of these activities.

Sir, I listened rather attentively to the long-winded address by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday evening. He spoke at length, for almost five hours, but the speech contained no substance. We must get past all of the partisan politics and start to deal with the tourism industry and how it provides the basis for most of these Estimates that we are talking about because we must get our tourism industry right. Whether or not a person belongs to the BLP, DLP or any other 'P', the issue remains that we must get our tourism industry right.

Sir, for the first time, what we are seeking to do is this. The industry as existed has done well but the industry has done well without being strategically planned. What we want to do is to provide a tourism industry for Barbados that is strategically planned and that is well researched. We want to put sustainable policies in place that will ensure into the near future that Barbados has a sustainable tourism industry.

Now, Sir, let me look very clearly at the performance of the tourism sector in the year 2000. Sir, I have said earlier that tourism declined in the year 1999 but in the year 2000 tourism went up by 8 per cent. The arrival figures went up, thanks to whoever. It does not make any difference who it was, the person was on this side of the House, that is the most important part. I must admit that the Democratic Labour Party spokesman for tourism, the erstwhile Senator ...

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

He is working his way down the ladder of success. He got from the Senate down here and before he could even warm his chair he was back over there.

He said that to look at the arrival figures alone is not the best way to measure performance of the sector, which is true. I must compliment him for that but he heard that from me anyway and he is just repeating what I said. The absolute arrival figure is not the best way to measure tourism performance but it is one of the measures on which we have focused in the past that continues to be a stable way to measure performance. Sir, there are other issues obviously which can be used, such as the measurement of per capita spent and the issue of bed nights. There are other ways to measure performance but what we have focussed on, is arrivals.

Sir, I will return to what we are doing in the Ministry of Tourism about the issue of measuring tourism performance in a better and more complete way but the issue is what will happen in the future. The basis of measurement which we use now is arrivals. Sir, in the year 2000 long-stay arrivals grew by 5.9 per cent to total 542 027 visitors. In the long-stay market, the United Kingdom market continues to be our most important market. Forty-one per cent of the long-stay visitors who came to Barbados in the year 2000, came from the United Kingdom, which is an increase of 11.2 per cent on the 1999 figure. The average annual growth in the United Kingdom market over the last five years has been 10.6 per cent.

Barbados continues to do well in the United Kingdom market and there are numerous reasons for that. The most important reason is that we continue to have this special appeal to the United Kingdom visitors. Now, whether that has to do with our long history, cricket, the similarities in Government et cetera or whatever it is, the fact is that we have done well out of the United Kingdom market.

There are also some business elements that have been favourable to Barbados. One of the issues is that the United Kingdom market is a tour operator market and the tour operators actually controls the market but once your national tourism organisation sits with the tour operators in that specific market you will continue to see the receipts.

The other issue is that there are substantial airlifts out of the United Kingdom to Barbados which is

unknown on the other side of the Atlantic. For a country to be able to ...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, you have two more minutes.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Two more minutes! I was now getting warm up for my friends over there on the other side of the aisle.

Sir, I want to say that tourism continues to contribute handsomely to our receipts and to say that tourism is in a state of reform. I want to make this point. I heard the Honourable Member for St. John last night talking about whether or not somebody is trying to reform the Barbados Tourism Authority or to chase away the people or whatever it is. That is a very irresponsible statement that has come from that side regarding this whole issue of the Barbados Tourism Authority.

Sir, there is no cart in front of the horse. Two weeks ago, I took to Cabinet a White Paper on Tourism Development for Barbados. On the basis of this document we will seek to reform the tourism industry in Barbados because the dynamic nature of the industry demands no less from us as a people. No changes will be made at the BTA or at any other 'A' under the Ministry of Tourism until this particular document has been debated in Parliament. It has to come here and everyone has to have his or her say.

This document represents the culmination of wide public discussion and consultation among the public of Barbados and tourism stakeholders. It speaks to some of the issues that are important to Barbados. Therefore, it takes into consideration the issue of the emergence of new challenges for the tourism sector such as trade liberalization, the growing world of information technology, increased regional and international competition, the increasing role of communities, the need for partnership between all sectors, the need for greater awareness of the industries and the importance of environmental conservation to the development of tourism.

Sir, to all those who have been shouting and talking, this document will come here and it will be debated here. What we determined in the people's place is how we will determine where the tourism industry goes and what we will do with any agency or any company that is under the Ministry of Tourism. To make absurd and ridiculous statements in the Press about people trying to create and reform the Barbados Tourism Authority, without actually coming here or without going to Cabinet is ludicrous and nonsensical but that is the kind of language that is associated with the erstwhile senator. He had 'Foot and Mouth' disease before I had it. He is the one that has constantly put his foot in his mouth in terms of tourism.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

I do not care if I suffer from it or not. The issue is that he continues to talk nonsense regarding the tourism sector. We will do nothing until this document is debated in here and we have created a path and a direction for the tourism industry of Barbados.

Sir, I am pleased to be associated with these Estimates and that we are here on this side and not over

there.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to lend my voice to the Estimates of Expenditure as laid in Parliament by the Honourable Minister of Finance yesterday. One of the things that I am very scared about even now is that we have not found a remedy for people who are walking around with the 'Foot and Mouth' disease because it could be contagious.

11:40 a.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

If it is contagious, it can be very upsetting and annoying to this country of ours. One of the problems that we are facing in this country, Sir, is an Opposition that seems to believe within themselves that this country has not gone forward. They themselves know very well that in previous years we have seen leaders in this country who have brought this country to a very high and respectable position at the international level. Barbados to date can be considered as one of the most progressive Third World Countries in the world.

Sir, the Leader of the Opposition who in my opinion has hopes of becoming a Prime Minister of this country one day. To hear the Leader of the Opposition making critical statements which would give people of the region and the world a backward picture of Barbados, I wonder if he is a true patriot and son of the soil. Sometimes I have to wonder, when I hear the criticism from the Opposition, if they are serious about the things of which they criticizing this Government for the last couple of years.

Sir, when we deal with matters that were caused in the past, this Government had to make corrective measures by right, because of what was done under the past regime. I will get to the Estimates and I will show you that this particular Government and the Estimates 2000-2001 prove the debt of the Opposition and their criticism.

Yesterday, I heard the Leader of the Opposition being critical of the Transport Board. One does not understand that in the debate of 1993 that the foundation was laid for the fall of the Transport Board as presented by the then Minister of Finance because in making his presentation dealing with matters of privatization, he dealt with the Pine Hill Dairy, Barbados National Oil Company and Arawak Cement Plant. He came down to the point and said:

"My Government in proceeding with its plan to privatize the Transport Board, under the proposed arrangement action will be taking the following measures as being put in place. Steps will be taken to invite expressions of interest from private entrepreneurs to operate routes currently served by the Transport Board excluding designated long haul and cross country routes."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, here is a government in 1993, who moved into what could be considered finances of a corporation in terms of taking away from them the right to make money. Furthermore, Sir, he said that the Transport Board will continue to operate school service, by-pass and cross country designated long haul routes as such offered routes have become necessary.

Now the routes that were given then, Sir, it should be obvious that without an increase in bus fare, the Transport Board was doomed for failure. When one stands in hear and speak as the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday, and he was critical of the Transport Board, it is obvious that they has forgotten fully that they were part of the slide of the Transport Board. All this Government is doing at this present moment is taking corrective measures to make it a better system for all concerned.

Sir, they talked about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know for a fact that there are problems facing the QEH and even though the Minister of Finance has set aside \$100 million to be spent in the rehabilitation of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, there are some corrective measures that must be put in place. One of these corrective measures, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be the taking of the politics out of the medicine at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We know for a fact that former Ministers of Health during their regime are responsible for what is happening at the Hospital today.

Sir, we have got a situation as far as the QEH is concerned - which can be considered as one of the best medical institutions anywhere in the Caribbean, it can be classed even at an international level because of the standard of service that can be given at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital - where the politics of medicine have started to move into the daily affairs of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and as a result of this we are seeing things being done which were not done in the past. We are seeing a situation, Sir, where the people of this country are faced with not getting the treatment they should get from the QEH, but they are recommended to various private clinics along the areas of Belleville and Strathclyde where the same practitioners practise within the walls of the QEH. This is a very serious situation when poor people in this country who are taxpayers, who should be benefiting from the services of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, are seen to be given directives that should depend on the private clinics.

Sir, we know for a fact that it was a long time in this country before people were given certain types of treatment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. These treatments were given at the private institutions which meant that the poor people of Barbados had to find the money to pay these practitioners in their various clinics. This cannot be fair. We know for a fact that as far as health care in this country is concerned that Barbados' health care can be seen and understood as one of the highest within the region. We have seen it.

When one tells us that as far as the hospital is concerned that it is falling, it is not falling. It is the individual behavioural patterns. We have seen the political movements even down to someone painting outside of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I do not know if anyone saw it the way I saw it. I believe that was a setup to embarrass this Government as far as the hospital is concerned. When you read between the lines, you will see that there was some sort of movement. When people can get to that level where you deal with a situation as serious as health care to show up the weaknesses, I am wondering

what those people on the other side when their time comes how they will face the music.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about health care in this country. When we look clearly at certain

statements made about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, we have got one of the best Ambulance Service anywhere in the Caribbean and people are critical of that.

11:50 a.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

I remember hearing the call-in programmes and people were critical of the paramedics. Check it! Within 20 minutes at any point in Barbados you can call anyone of the ambulances in Barbados and I am certain that you can be taken to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

You could also consider, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that there has been a tremendous improvement in the Accident and Emergency Department at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital so that when one tells you that as far as the QEH is concerned that the standards are falling, they are not. These are political gimmicks coming from the Opposition. I would like to ask the question again of the Opposition whether they are serious about a better Barbados. Are they serious about giving Barbadians what is rightfully theirs and removing the politics out of the medicine?

They talk about racism in this country, and they are holding on to everything. Some time ago, they were talking about racism and were trying to divide Barbados. Sometime ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were talking about the economy, and as far as the economy is concerned, we have understood clearly that it is at its best.

They talk about unemployment, and we know that in 1992 the unemployment in this country was 29 per cent and in 1993, it was 30 per cent. Today, we have an unemployment figure, thanks to the leadership and the direction of the Minister of Finance, the Right Honourable Leader of this Party, the representative for St. Peter, you have a situation which is down now to almost 11 per cent.

What is happening in this country is because of the employment in this country, not unemployment. You have a situation where Government agencies like National Housing Corporation is faced with a crisis because as long as people start to work their next motive is to own a property, to be independent, to live at themselves, so the speed of the reduction in unemployment in this country needs to be matched, which the Minister of Housing at present...

I would like to take time out to compliment the workers at the site on the corner of Country Road and Whitepark. Any one of us who would have passed the site at Country Road and Whitepark where we see the construction of those houses going up must understand that this is a serious government in finding work and finding housing for people in this country, and the Opposition must be very careful in their criticism.

When it comes to governance, this Government is serious about giving Barbadians a better standard of living. They were critical of the police and tried to separate us and the police and tried to create a division between the police and the defence force. Everything they have tried, in order to destabilise this Government and Barbados, not understanding that Barbadians are not fools anymore. I would like to correct that. Barbadians are not fools but Barbadians might have been fools between a period of time when they were controlled by a particular party, when they were misled to believe that education ...

Let me tell you what is facing this country at the present moment, and I have analysed this. The biggest problems that we are getting in this country now are some of those people who had free secondary education under their Government who believe that they have an obligation to a party and to a country, some of those people who were educated under the free education system. If they would remove the partisan element and serve this country in the various Government departments that they should serve, it would be better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at health care in this country and you take the eight polyclinics across Barbados, there was a time in this country when people were critical of the polyclinics under the former regime and the polyclinics today are providing adequate service and I can tell you of the polyclinic on the other side of my constituency, in the constituency of St. Michael West Central where it serves the people who live on the borders of that area, the Black Rock area, Fairfield area, the Brighton area, the St. Stephen's area. Black Rock Polyclinic should be complimented and will be complimented for the standard of service that is provided for the constituents in that area, all the people who are serviced by it. Health care does not only rest at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, it also rests at the eight different polyclinics across Barbados, where service, family care and satisfaction is given on a daily basis to the elderly and to the young.

One must be very serious. Regarding the \$100 million which is set aside for the rehabilitation of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital there are certain things that must be put in place. Otherwise, I believe that at a later date because of political sabotage we might not see where that \$100 million has gone. Yes, a board of management would be put in place and it is obvious that with a board of management being put in place we should see a better run Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

I am also of the opinion, Sir, that those people who do not feel good as far as the health care of this country is concerned, who carry a political flag, I do not believe that politics should be a medicine, neither from this side and party to which I belong and neither from the Opposition, but the Opposition has indoctrinated the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. They have corrupted certain departments within the Ministry of Education and I know for a fact that they have corrupted those departments. The School Meals Department has been corrupted by those people for a long time and it is now being cleaned. This is what this Party is doing, cleaning the dirty work that was done by the former Government, and if it is not cleaned then it does not make sense spending.

When you look at the resignations that are taking place in the Ministry of Education those people have reached a point. When you look at the resignations coming through the Queen Elizabeth Hospital the day will come when it will be cleaned; the trouble makers will be on the outside. It is only a matter of time that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Ministry of Education, the School Meals and various Government departments that are faced with political victimization by certain people who have a flag to

carry, will be cleaned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the recommendations that I would like to see as far as this \$100 million is being spent... Yes, the Prime Minister has agreed that there must be an extension of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

I would also believe that it is the duty of everyone at the hospital from the auxiliary staff to the medical practitioners to understand the responsibility of health care. When you consider that you are hearing statements that certain patients must buy this and certain patients must buy that to take to the wards, one must understand clearly that there has to be quality control put in place.

For too long in Government departments in this country people have not bought groceries for months. Because standards have fallen, certain things are removed. Sir, we must be honest. If we do not want to admit this, then we are not truly representatives of the people, if we cannot come into this Parliament and say that in order to stop the wastage, the pilferage and the stealing certain things must be put in place.

12:00 noon

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

When things are put in place then you can spend all the money you want but if you do not put these things in place then things will continue to go down the drain.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is also a matter of concern that they have accused this Government as far as land is concerned. The figures show that during the period 1991 to 1994, in terms of land acquisition that they have done nothing to improve the housing stock or land stock in Barbados. From 1994 to 2001 the amount of land acquired by the Ministry of Housing shows clearly that this Government is serious about providing homes for people in this country in terms of ownership. Many young people today are thinking seriously about ownership not about renting because if they start to pay rent then they will continue to pay rent. I will say to the Ministry of Housing that the time is coming that there should be a crash programme in house building in Barbados but one of the problems facing the Ministry of Housing is the development of the areas where the lands are and when that is put on stream we will see a faster provision as far as housing in this country is concerned.

Sir, I would like to say that for many years Barbadians were seen walking with shoes in their hands because they could not get from the top of the gap to bottom, if it rained. I am happy to say that over the last eight years that a good percentage of tenantry roads have been built. Not only were tenantry roads built within the last ten years but within the period 2000 to 2001, a lot of the tenantry roads in Barbados that needs to be rebuilt will be important to those people who travel because they now have motorcars, motorcycles and other means of transportation so they need to get to and from their homes in comfort.

This Government is providing a better terrain for people to get to their households.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy can tell you, and I have said before, that there were times in the constituency of St. Lucy that the roads were bad. I believe that this is the first time that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy can drive from the children home to the roundabout at the St. Lucy Parish Church, all the way to North Point on nice barber green roads.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that the road that leads from the children home to the roundabout at St. Lucy's Church is in good condition. It is quite the opposite, Sir, and I would not recommend that piece of road for you to drive on. I believe the Honourable Member was not travelling by day and that is why he has mistaken the condition of the road.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not talking about Benthams. The Honourable Member would understand that I know the two roads. There is one which is Benthams and Barrows which is not comfortable but I am speaking of the road which is part of the highway that takes you all the way across to the East Coast. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not let him think that he is going to mislead anyone in here because I am familiar with what I am talking about.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member still continues to mislead the House. If the Honourable Member is not speaking about Barrows Children Home then he has to be speaking about Farris Children Home and everybody knows that anyone travelling into St. Lucy does not take the road from Rose Hill to Alleynedale, they go up Benn Hill and take the Duncan O'Neale road because the road leading to Farris Children Home is bad and nobody takes that road anymore. The Honourable Member is deliberately misleading the House this time around.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like the Honourable Member to tell me if it is not a comfortable drive from the roundabout outside of the parish church all the way to River Bay. If it is not a comfortable drive, I will be misleading this House. I will then sit down and ask the Honourable Member if I am misleading the House. The Honourable Member knows that what I a saying is true.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is definitely misleading the House.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is extremely important that we give credit to the Honourable Minister of Finance for not only bringing the Estimates of Expenditure for 2001 but if you look back clearly we will see the growth and improvement on a daily basis. We have a very high employment rate in Barbados. As far as housing in this country is concerned there has been a tremendous improvement in housing in this country in terms of property ownership. If you look at the health care, it is only the Queen Elizabeth Hospital that you hear criticism about which shows that there is a direct target as far as this Government is concerned. If you look at the plans in terms of road building in this country you will see that this

Government is on stream. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Honourable Minister of Education speaking a while ago and there are days coming in this country when Barbadians will be shopping by e-commerce. They have already started to shop on the computer. Barbados is not the Barbados that they are trying to make you believe it is. They were critical of the Ministry of Education and EduTech 2000. I am proud to tell you that the average young person in Barbados who has access to a computer can make an old person wonder who taught them the computer. It seems that every child born within the last ten years is born with some sort of computer training in advance.

When the Opposition is critical of the development of this country, the day will come when the same criticism will be levelled at them.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the Estimates debate at the second reading of the Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister and Ministry of Finance, the Honourable Member for St. Peter on his management of the economic and financial affairs of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this takes me back to a period leading up to the Elections. I remember the Honourable Member for St. John on the Democratic Labour Party's platform stating that the economy was not an issue in the election campaign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again, the economy is not an issue at the beginning of the year 2001.

12:10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

It is well understood by the academics as well as political commentators that this economy is well placed and well managed, unlike some of our neighbouring economies and some farther afield. The Barbados economy is sound and the economic fundamentals will reveal that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me start on that note.

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

The facts will come later in my presentation Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I stood here yesterday afternoon listening to the Honourable Member for St. John making a very long, drawn out and boring speech. It reminded me of an incident at the University of the West Indies when I was an undergraduate. There was a youngster from St. Peter and we were taking a lecture with the late and distinguished economist Mr. Wendell McClean and this youngster from St. Peter had the opportunity to make a presentation before the class. It was a tutorial in Monetary Economics. The youngster was appearing to be impressive and after fifteen minutes of discourse Mr. McClean stopped him and he said in a very quite voice, "Mr. Bovell I hope you know that you have not scored a point yet."

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John spoke yesterday at length about the economy and most of what he said certainly was not borne out by the actual evidence. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings me around to a point I must make now. It seems to be that Opposition politics in Barbados today is characterised by those Members on the other side, in most cases, the Honourable Member for St. John making statements about the economy that are not rooted in fact. It is either that he is doing this deliberately or that he is engaging in issues of which he has little or no knowledge. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is very unfortunate because the evidence is clear that the Barbados economy has been performing very well and in the year 2000 had a spectacular performance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very fortunate that my constituents in St. Philip South have imposed a level of confidence in me at this time which would not allow me to sit with the Opposition at this stage or any other stage for that matter. Sir, if Opposition policies are to be characterised like that, I certainly would not want to be in the Opposition at any stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get into the matter of agriculture and other important features of these Estimates, which will no doubt redound to the benefit of my constituents with many of the others, I need to respond to some of the claims made by the Opposition Leader yesterday afternoon. Sir, these things are very unfortunate but I have to speak to them.

The Honourable Member for St. John alluded to a statement yesterday when he said that the Prime Minister cannot show evidence of growth in the trading sector. He was giving the impression that the macro economic strategy utilised by this administration is one which is leading to some type of unbalanced approach. The Honourable Member also suggested that the non-trading sector is leading the trading sector and, therefore, the macro economic strategy is not one that would lead to sustainable progress.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have before me a release of the Central Bank which was given in January, 2001. I am going to read a particular paragraph from this document. Review of the Economy for the Year 2000 and I quote. "Real output in 2000 is estimated to have grown by 3.7 per cent, compared with 2.3 per cent in 1999 and a five-year annual average increase of 2.9 per cent."

I should say at this point that the out-turn growth figures for last year were in excess of what was anticipated at the beginning of the period. So, our performance exceeded what was predicted for last

year. Unlike the previous three years that this was conducted, when the non-trading sectors, especially construction, led the expansion of the economy, growth in 2000 was driven by the improved outcome of the trading sectors, particularly, sugar and tourism. The increase in activity in the trading sectors is estimated at 5.2 per cent compared with 3 per cent for the non-trading sectors. Sir, straight away that has put a light to what the Opposition Leader said yesterday when he gave the impression that the growth in the economy last year was led by the non-trading sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he also gave the impression that the Honourable Member for St. Peter was speaking with forked tongues or trying to mislead this Honourable Chamber when he suggested that there should be a revision to the definition on the taxonomy for trading and non-trading sectors. He was seeking to suggest that the Minister of Finance was looking for a widening of the definition of the non-trading sectors so as to deal with what he said earlier about us pursuing unstructured or unbalanced growth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very unfortunate that the Opposition Leader is not here because I would like to tell him that those who are well trained in this discipline of economics know that if you hold to a rigid line between non-trading and trading sector, as it sometimes called productive and non-productive sectors, some commentators would want to use the distinction between foreign exchange using and foreign exchange generating sectors that if you hold to a rigid line, one of the things that you are overlooking is the importance of linkages between sectors.

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister has made the point in here that some of the activity that is driven by the construction sector is in a way paving the way for the Barbados economy to benefit from activity in the trading sectors sometime down the road.

For example, our investment in capital projects will show as a form of construction activity.

12:20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the very near future, for example, the return to tourism as a result of activities fuelled in construction will indicate that holding fast to the distinction between trading and non-trading sectors will be misleading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is like having a growth model and within a growth model there is a series of arguments. Within that model, there may be an argument on the investment in human capital. As the Honourable Member for St. Michael South said it is a very worthwhile investment but we do not get

immediate returns of investment in human capital. It takes a period of time for the impact of training to be felt in the performance statistics.

Therefore, as I said earlier, holding a clear line of distinction between the trading and non-trading sector does not allow one to appreciate the importance of sectoral linkages.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John - and I am very sorry that he is not here today - would like us to believe that the level of confidence shown by business persons and others in this economy has declined. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ernst & Young, a very reputable international firm each year carries out a survey of persons who are investors and aspiring investors in this country. Ernst & Young seeks to get their views about the performance of the Barbados economy, both in current period and in future years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one needs to read, one needs to study what the Ernst & Young publication in this regard tells us? What does it tell us? I do not have the document here, so I cannot make it a document of this House. What I do remember from it is that the level of confidence in the Barbados economy has soared and that investors have told us they are happy with the performance of the Barbados economy and are prepared to continue doing business in Barbados.

Therefore, there is nothing to suggest that the level of confidence in this economy has declined, notwithstanding the fact of the empty boasts and the stupid noises made by the Honourable Members on the other side in relation to the crime and violence and the Government's approach in tackling those problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to give you the facts about Barbados' economic performance and then you can be the judge, or the others here can be the judge as to whether or not we have an economy that is not performing well and that will lead to a decline in the confidence in this economy.

I made mention of the fact a couple of minutes ago that real output in the year 2000, is estimated to have grown by 3.7 per cent as compared to 2.3 per cent in 1999 and a five-year annual average increase of 2.9 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all seriousness, the annual average for the last 5 years is 2.9 per cent, so we performed last year in excess of the trend in the last five years. And there was a decline in the confidence of the Barbados economy? I mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker ... let me continue.

Let me speak to the agricultural sector because the Honourable Member for St. John came in here yesterday and he would also like us to believe that the commercial agricultural sector is all but wiped out. Yes, we recognize that the regional and economic environment is such that we will have to refocus and reposition the agricultural sector in order to deal effectively with the challenges that are posed for us within the region and in the international economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these challenges were with us for some time now. It is true they are intensifying but this is the performance of the agricultural sector last year: Sugar output rose by 9.7 per cent to 58,400 tons as a result of the timely start of the 1999 harvest; a reduction in the total acreage of cane and

favourable rain fall; the non-sugar agricultural sector is estimated to have increased by 5.5 per cent compared with growth of 4.3 per cent in 1999; milk Production rose by 2.8 per cent in contrast to a decline of 10.2 per cent in 1999.

Additionally, the number of fish landing expanded by 1.8 per cent. The 'fish kill', which occurred in the latter half of 1999 continues to adversely affect fish farming. Chicken production fell marginally because of the lower price of imported chicken parts during the third quarter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Members on the other side are prophets of doom and gloom, but we need to avail ourselves of the hard facts. We recognize that yes, we need to do some work at the level of planning in the agricultural sector in order to keep commercial agriculture viable, but we should not come into this Honourable Chamber and give the impression that the agricultural sector is all but folding up, because the performance of the sector as is indicated in this release suggests otherwise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition also said that economic historians will show that the economy was drifting along during the 1990's and any gains can be attributed to the economic performance of the early 1990's. Now, that is the biggest set of foolishness I have heard in this Chamber since I have arrived. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you do not have to be ...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member, please rephrase what was said.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

In the context, as opposed to repeat?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I said is what I mean, but I will rephrase it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing is further from the truth.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Rephrase it. Rephrase the statement from the beginning.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the early part of the 1990's the Barbados economy was one on its knees and the Administration at the time sought help from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the prescription at the time was standard structural adjustment programme. And what that structural adjustment programmes, obviously was to do Mr. Deputy Speaker, was to provide a set of measures which did not speak to things like repositioning the Barbados economy, creating a new economy to one that is technologically driven. It all spoke to reduction in Government expenditure and we know what happened during that period as a result of the reduction of Government expenditure.

So Mr. Speaker, there is nothing to suggest that in the early part of the 1990's the strategy that was pursued at that time was one which would steer the Barbadian economy for a repositioning and restructuring in an increasingly competitive international environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John also said yesterday that Government has

done nothing to support the sugar industry in the last six years, in fact, Government's policy has been inconsistent with the requirement of the sugar industry.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter alluded to it yesterday, the initiatives the Government expects to revitalize the sugar industry. In 1994, when the Barbados Labour Party's Administration, in response to the declining activities in the sugar sector, initiated a cane replanting incentive scheme, sugar production in Barbados fell to a record low in 1995 of 38,000 tons.

The cane replanting incentive scheme which was put in place provided \$1.8 million for the years 1995-1999 to facilitate planters who we were encouraged to bring more lands back into sugar cane and that assistance has been rolled over. Last year the Government provided \$1.6 million in the cane planting incentive scheme and that is to be rolled over to another two years in the first instance. A careful review of the scheme would be done in the next two years with a view to making any changes if necessary and that is one initiative that has brought benefit to the sugar industry.

Sugar production moved upwards from 38,000 in 1995 and last year, as I mentioned earlier, the production figures were in the order of 58,400 tons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government in response to the difficulties experienced by the estates last year made available a sum of \$3.5 million in price support. And why did the Government do that? Because the Government is committed to the sugar industry, quite unlike what the Honourable Member for St. John said yesterday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognize that there are certain factors outside of the legitimate control of the Government of Barbados which impact on the revenue we get from the sugar industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the payment for the sugar we export to the European Union is paid in Euros. The Euro, as a currency, continue to decline relative to the US dollar.

12:35 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

As a result of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and because the price is fixed at Euro 523 per tonne, our planters have been experiencing declining revenue for the sugar exported to the European Union.

What is also informative here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the European Union in having to meet its WTO commitments, their actions resulted and will continue to result in a decline in the price we get for sugar in the European market by estimates of 2 per cent to 3 per cent annually for the next seven years or so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you combine those two things, the decline of 2 per cent to 3 per cent resulted from the European Union having to meet its WTO commitments and the continued deterioration in the Euro relative to the US dollar, it means that a caring and responsible Government will have to respond to the financial dislocation which will result from those two factors. Sir, last year, our response to a request made to us by the sugar planters was to make available \$3.5 million. This was on top of the \$1.6 million for the cane replanting incentives.

The Opposition Leader was in this Honourable Chamber last August when I treated this House to a full debate on the sugar industry. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that debate ensued because I came into this Honourable House seeking approval from all of us for the Government to provide a guarantee for the BADMC through a bond issue to get \$51 million to support the operation. And it was not an issue.

The Honourable Member for St. John who knows about these things because they were started in his time, readily consented to the Government's request to support BADMC's bond issue to the tune of \$51 million which will be spent over a two-year period. But still I would hear yesterday that we have not been providing any assistance to the sugar industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me move from agriculture and get onto the salient features of the Estimates but I am going to do it as a way of responding to some of the other claims made by the Honourable Member for St. John. He said that in more recent times, there has been a deterioration of social services, of health, of the road network and there has been a lack of orderly educational planning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know I thought that we were stuck in time and that we were still in that period of 1991 to 1994 because that was a period that was really characterised by these things by a significant deterioration of social services in health and in the road net. There was also a lack of orderly educational planning and a lack of orderly planning for almost every activity in this country during that period. But certainly, he could not be speaking to a Barbados of 2001. Let me look at these Estimates and give you an idea.

In respect of the social services, this responsible Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in an effort to fast track the delivery of services, took a conscious decision to establish the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission. Sir, reasonable sums of money were made available to those two agencies to discharge their duties in a way which would lead to a betterment or an improvement in the delivery of social services as opposed to their being a deterioration in the social services.

Sir, I would not say much more about that because when the Ministry of Agriculture's Head is taken, I will discuss the Rural Development Commission in detail.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, your time has expired. One last statement.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last statement I have to make is that I fully support the structure of these Estimates and I know deep within my heart that the Barbados Labour Party Administration will continue to lead this economy on its current course. We have benefited tremendously from eight years of economic progress. The Press release of the Central Bank tells me that in 2001, despite the ongoing

challenges facing the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, real economic activity is projected to grow by 2 per cent to 2.5 per cent.

It also tells me that this Government which has been exercising fiscal prudence all along will be able to manage the affairs of this country with a deficit of within 2 per cent of GDP and this deficit is very easy to manage. I commend these Estimates to this Honourable House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I look forward to continue to work with this Administration for the betterment of the people of this country.

I thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 145 p.m. today.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this House do now suspend until 1:45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12:45 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

This sitting is resumed.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, I want to commend the Honourable Member for St. Peter, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, for the very scholarly and professional way in which he introduced the Appropriation Bill yesterday. I think his presentation was almost unblemished.

At the same time I want to say that the Honourable Member for St. John, as he struggled to make his presentation, was just literally picking at all of the ministries and when he reached the Ministry of Labour he said that he would not worry with the Ministry of Labour because he is so accustomed to saying the only one thing that he can find to say about the Ministry of Labour, which is dealing with legislation. I think that actually meant that he gave the Ministry of Labour a clean bill of health.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin this presentation by saying that I do not think that Barbadians have really realized what is happening and what a masterful account of himself the Minister of Finance is actually giving because it is virtually unbelievable that our economy, our employment figures, our

foreign reserves and other economic indicators are showing positive signs despite our ongoing battles with things like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), trade liberalization, the downturn in the United States of America economy and with the diverse economic challenges which we are facing almost on a daily basis.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter actually said that the reason for the Estimates really is to spur on employment but I think that we have done quite well in that area. I think we have done so too despite the many mergers and amalgamations of companies and so on that are happening in Barbados and this is what I really and truly want to address.

I spoke to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North and told him that I like to use a theme in my presentation. The whole question of the effect of mergers on us in Barbados is exactly what I will come back to later because I remember the Honourable Member for St. John making the point that the Prime Minister cannot speak to the 250 people who will soon be terminated at Cable and Wireless and he picked that up as his theme.

I want to say, Sir, that this question of employment is a concern to us on this side. We have had the unemployment figures down to 9.3 per cent and I think that is excellent. We have been able to do it, as I have said, despite the numerous mergers that we are having. We, on this side, came to office on a slogan: "Job Number 1 is Jobs" and we have always kept that in our focus and have never forgotten it. I know that there are times when a lot of people on this side have been saying, and we have discussed it, that despite the efforts we are making we can still feel a bit of strain and we can still feel the obstacles ever so often. In other words, that we are running almost like Obadele and then suddenly we have to be running as though we are running through water. The resistance is there because so many people are being laid off now and then that we tend to feel the effect.

I want to say that mergers are in the air in Barbados. There is no question about that whatsoever. Mr. Deputy Speaker, since we cannot tell businessmen how to run their businesses, we as Barbadians will have to learn to cope with these mergers. We cannot hold back the tide of global competition. We have to go with the tide. Obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there will be times when employers will feel that there are instances where the services delivered by two or three desperate companies could better be delivered under a single management. For that reason, we may very well be seeing in Barbados a situation where Barbados Shipping and Trading Company Limited may try to corner the supermarket niche and a similar thing could very well be happening in furniture. The point is, as I have said, that we just cannot tell people how to run their businesses.

Of course, when we create these monopoly type situations it restricts the consumer because they have very little choice in terms of products. In terms of furniture and so on you are going to find that the styles will virtually be the same because when you go into these situations you tend to destroy variety and consumers will only be getting what the market offers but as I said we will definitely have to cope.

The truth of matter is that other companies tend to consider themselves vulnerable when the first two companies have merged and then those other companies that consider themselves vulnerable find themselves merging as well and so the process continues. You are going to find a situation where if two supermarkets merged and become powerful then two more supermarkets are going to say that in order for them to now compete with the big one, the two of them will have to merge and it continues like that

time and time again.

I want to say, Sir, that it is not only Barbados which is experiencing this state of mergers which is going on. In fact, some companies merged overseas and we in Barbados feels every bit of that pinch. Recently, Sir, there was a situation in Canada where two shipping lines merged. These were two shipping lines which were served by two separate agencies in Barbados and because of the merger overseas there was then need for only one agency in Barbados as opposed to the two. Therefore, you can see the effect which an overseas merger can very well have on us here in Barbados.

The rationale for these amalgamations is what the employers and the business owners call 'the eradication of excess employee baggage.' It is also a fact that businessmen also argue that there will be an obvious sharing of strength, the strength of the two companies, because most of them would be delivering the same type of goods and most of them would have their various strong points and so on. Ninety-nine per cent of the companies that merged are always into the same type of business anyhow.

We do not, I do not think we can, doubt the advantages that will flow from the merging of expertise and the merging of technology. It is an obvious benefit. We do not doubt that the bigger you are, the more powerful you will become. You will be able to place bigger orders. You will be able to get better prices and you may be able to pass the item on to the consumer more cheaply. It is precisely because the companies are so similar that severance becomes inevitable.

1:55 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE:

I feel very sorry for persons in the workforce now who are being affected day by day by the numerous mergers that we are having in Barbados. Very often, Sir, the managerial staff goes and some of these persons are in their fifties and have worked for the company for years. Now in the twilight of their days, nobody wants them after they are forced out of the business. They may not be the most suitable candidates for retraining and nobody really wants them. I believe that a lot of those who are to go from Cable and Wireless have skills and I believe that they are more fortunate and perhaps they would find something to do later.

Personally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not believe that companies in Barbados send home workers just for the sake of sending them home. I do not think that it is because the employers are spiteful or do not care. It is within my knowledge, Sir, that a lot of employers see their employees as part of their family. I want to make this point that very often the agony of separation is as poignant for the employer as it is for the employee. I think that Barbadians should realise that sometimes very often the employer feels it as much as the employee does.

Separation for the most part is always painful. It could be a divorce, school leaving, a death, whatever

form the separation takes, more often than not, Sir, it is a painful thing and it is always somebody's job to make separation palatable and that can be extremely difficult. To sell separation to an employees or to sell separation to the public is not easy. Anyone who has the task of pushing a person into an unknown environment has a frightening task.

Corporate communication of this type, Sir, is never easy. It is a very emotional responsibility. I know of a situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where the human resources manager who was supposed to be trained in all of this was given the job of telling the other workers that they had to go and the very human resources manager that was doing it was one that had to go. It is like that.

No wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the handshake is sometimes a golden one. No wonder that where it is financially possible it is done in a way that makes the employer and the employee come out both as winners. The employer will get enough, I believe, Sir, to help pay off his mortgage and sometimes there is something left over for what we call a nest egg. This can be done by the powerful companies that have the financial resources to offer decent packages. So, to the employer, it also carries a huge price; and in a small society like Barbados, big companies in particular, are forced to do their separations properly and in a way that the public will not regard them as corporate monsters.

The fact of the matter is that there are a lot of Barbadian companies that do not have the required resources or the basket to offer those elevated packages that I am speaking about and the severance payment usually offered by them without more, never gives satisfaction to the workers.

I would feel more for the workers, the girls at the Harbour Road without any skills, than for the ones in the big companies with skills who are being terminated. I would feel more for the maids at the big companies than for the skilled workers at the big companies who are being terminated.

I know the way that some of us feel and how some workers feel when this happens and I have to say that suicide is not the answer. It is a pity that this society of ours does not teach employees how to cope with adversity. We need to teach people that opportunities very often come out of crises, that there are different paths to success. Some of those paths, Sir, may be rocky but opportunities for things like entrepreneurship can come from being severed.

I have a classic example of my relative who used to work with Trowel Plastics Barbados Limited and was severed. He went into his own business doing the same thing and the last time I spoke to him he said that he has work now until June. In other words, any time that you want him you have to speak about after June. He is doing extremely well, and that came out of a severance. It came out of adversity.

Aside.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE:

It is a fact that he earns more than the Ministers of Government do.

I know of another lady who was working at a supermarket with her relatives and she suffered a similar fate. She went into the seasoning business doing seasonings and she too is doing extremely well. The point I am making is that yes, I know how you feel when you are let go but, very often, you can use it to your advantage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say, and I will not be long, that the Ministry of Labour will continue to see itself as having a foreign exchange earning capacity and it will continue to see itself as an agency that will help, wherever possible, to create employment for the workers of this country. My instruction, Sir, to the liaison officer in Canada who looks after the farm labour programme is to take hold of every available opportunity that he sees for Barbadians to work overseas, not only on the farms in Canada. I have told him not to confine himself to looking in Canada for work for Barbadian farm workers, that any other opportunity that he can see to let us know. I think that the Ministry of Labour has that function to perform.

2:05 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE:

Sir, right now, on my desk is a request from Canada for hotel workers. Also, on my desk from Canada is a request for Barbadians to work in the race horse industry as grooms and jockeys. Sir, in this way we, through the Ministry of Labour, will continue to earn foreign exchange. We earn thousands of dollars in foreign exchange from the farm labour programme and we can also do this if we get into the hotel industry in Canada.

Sir, I can also tell you that in the United States programme we have also been able to make a breakthrough. It was the attitude of one of our sister Caribbean island that that particular programme belonged to them. In fact, it is called 'the Jamaica programme' in the United States and they think that the only country which has a right to have their people work in hotels in the United States is Jamaica. As I said, we have been able to make a breakthrough and we have sent workers there. The workers have come back and we have had good reports about them. We now have a request for 150 more Barbadian workers. Less than one hour ago, the Permanent Secretary was here with a blank petition to fill in names to send people there. They are so impressed with the Barbadians who went in the first place that they want it done quickly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the young ladies in Barbados who are unemployed and know they can do well in these programmes should go to Verona House and register because we also put them through a training programme where they go to the Hospitality Institute and learn various skills to be a waitress or whatever they are doing. We also teach them Spanish because very often they come across guests who speak Spanish so in the six weeks we do some conversational Spanish as well. We also give them life skills to show them how to get along with people who are not Barbadians and to let them know that they go for one particular thing and, therefore, they should concentrate on that alone.

Sir, the Ministry of Labour has been doing all of that because Barbados is small and job opportunities are limited and, therefore, when we have opportunities to send our people abroad to make a contribution to this country by bringing back home foreign exchange we should do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that the Estimates, as brought before this House by the Honourable Prime Minister, show that he is on his way to creating a record of eight successive years of sustained growth. He has done all of this in the face of the Opposition, who on numerous occasions went public saying that things are not expected to do well and that this was going to be a period of gloom and doom. Far from that happening we have had a record eight years of sustained growth. I believe it is because of the fiscal prudence of the Prime Minister that we have found ourselves in this position.

Sir, I am obliged to you.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am much obliged to you for recognising my presence. I want to join with all Honourable Member on our side who have spoken thus far and who have considered it proper that the Honourable Member for St. Peter and Minister of Finance should be congratulated on the economic achievements of this administration over the last eight years. I too would wish to add my quota of congratulations.

I think that we, as a governing party and we as a people, need to congratulate ourselves without losing sight of the fact that we are living in an increasingly more hostile and challenging environment. Before I develop that theme, permit me to say that I was in St. Vincent last weekend at the launching of the second book by the Prime Minister in waiting, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves. His book is entitled 'The politics of Caribbean Civilisation'. It was a very successful media event attended by some 200 people and carried live by three radio stations. My responsibility there was to review the book and also doing the review with me was Tim Hector, editor of the Outreach Newspaper in Antigua. He made the point that Barbados is the best organised black society in the entire world. He made that point to very thunderous applause.

I was grateful for the compliment as a Barbadian and I was very touched. I had heard for years in responsible circles that Barbados is the model for small island states to follow and I understood why but I had never heard it said that we are the best organised black society in the world. After, I returned to it in private discussion and all those present said that it was without doubt a statement of fact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, having sat in here and lived through the last eight years, I am beginning to get a feel for why it is that we as a people have done so well. We have not only been fortunate for the most part in our leadership in public affairs but we have been fortunate because of our investment in social and human capital and the fact that we ensured that wealth is equally distributed as much as we can achieve it. In that respect Barbados is one of the leaders in the Caribbean and Latin America.

We are concerned to ensure that our institutions private and public, function and that certain standards of probity are maintained in public life.

2:15 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM:

All of those factors have served us well. Again in this period of our history we have been very well served by the Barbados Labour Party in office. We need not only to congratulate the Prime Minister who is worthy of the loudest and strongest applause, but we need to congratulate ourselves as Barbadians for what we have achieved and ourselves, too, as a Party which has made such an outstanding contribution to the public well-being ever since we came into being in the late 1930's.

We are not to become complacent because the environment in which we operate becomes, with every passing day, increasingly more challenging. We have immediately, the dislocations that will be occasioned by liberalisation and globalisation. Sir, particularly difficult for manufacturing and agriculture. We ought not to lose sight of the fact the unease in the Middle East may very well result in the price for oil going through the roof, as it were, for the second time in 20 years. You will remember that we had the oil crisis in the early 1970's and 1980's. Again we see the price of oil move well beyond the levels that we have known in recent years. We ought not to lose sight of the fact that should there be a sustained downturn in the American economy, we would end up with a serious contraction in world trade, which too will affect us here in Barbados.

In short, we can do everything right as we have been doing for the last seven or eight years and yet be blown off course, not through any fault of our own, but because of hard external winds as it were. What I fear is happening is that a culture of satisfaction and complacency have overtaken us to the extent that people already forget the difficult days through which we passed in the period of the late 1980's to mid 1990's before the Barbados Labour Party assumed office in the present period.

Sir, difficult days lie ahead for sugar agriculture and indeed for non-sugar agriculture. Other speakers alluded to triggering factors that are causing the difficulties in the sugar sector in particular the fact that the European Union States to which we sell almost all of our sugar, are at present and will in the future be offering us a decline in price for our sugar resulting from the fact that they have had to put their agriculture in harmony with the World Trade Organisation rules and the subsidies will, over time, be completely dismantled.

In addition to that, the permanent assurance which we thought we had for sugar on the Protocol under the LOMA Convention, we know that there is nothing permanent in life. Although we were told, until recently, that was supposed to endure for as long as the Convention lasts, we now know that, we will have no more than a three-year guarantee.

That comes against the backdrop that the cost of production in Barbados being, perhaps, the highest in the world. The result is that sugar is facing once again a critical situation. I say once again, because throughout the life of the sugar industry, those who know its history, know that we have moved from crisis to crisis with only short periods of prosperity. What I want to warn against, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is persons in public life with the standing of the Leader of the Opposition, for example, almost announcing the death of the industry to the point that people may feel that all that remains now is for the date of burial to be determined.

I think that the moment calls for creative thinking - creative thinking which over the centuries has been the manner of our response here in Barbados. What I particularly fear is that the Ministry of

Agriculture, this has nothing to do with the Minister, is not organised as a bureaucracy to provide the body of ideas needed. It is not widely appreciated that it is 20 years and more since the Ministry of Agriculture has lost its capacity to advise on sugar matters. That arose partly because the financial aspect of sugar has been in the Ministry of Finance for many years.

It is only for the short period of five years when I was Minister of Agriculture that the financial aspect of agriculture came back to the Ministry of Agriculture. The then Prime Minister insisted on that. He said that no self respecting Minister would want to be a Minister where half of the Ministry is located elsewhere. So Mr. Jerry Helgelberg who was the consultant and advisor to the Ministry of Finance was relocated to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM:

Mr. Helgelberg is in the island now and I had a long chat with him earlier today and he sent his regards to all of his friends.

As soon as I left the Ministry we had the situation of the financial aspect being relocated to the Ministry of Finance and over time there has been no understudy from the Ministry of Agriculture with the Ministry of Finance looking at the financial aspect. Even in agriculture the Ministry of Agriculture has lost its interest and capacity to advise and guide on sugar agriculture.

For that reason I am suggesting to the Government and the Minister that they need to put together a group from which this creative thinking, this Barbadian sensible, practical and careful response to the difficulties of the moment will be had. I do not think that there is any reason to throw up our hands in total despair and say as the Kittitians are saying now, that the end has come as far as sugar agriculture is concerned.

If, indeed, it has to happen after five or ten years whatsoever, we have to have a plan in place because the importance of the sugar industry is no number in the employed or no longer in the generation of foreign exchange. The main significance of sugar in Barbados is because it is the crop that grows naturally here and ensures that Barbados does not become a waste land.

2:25 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM:

In short, if the 30 000 acres were to be taken out of sugar, what immediate would happen. We would have the problem of having to protect it, keep it from weeds and from over growth and the very strength that we have now which goes to our tourism that Barbados is like a well-managed garden, a well-cultivated garden, we will lose that and it would be a threat to our tourism, if the countryside were to

become like a waste land.

It is the environmental protection, to use the expression of my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, that is today the major *raison d'être* for the continuation of the sugar industry. But if it happens that every other year 1 500 acres were to become available, that is no longer under cultivation of sugar, what do we propose to do with it? In that respect, I want to ensure that the Government is ready with a response and that we are not caught with our pants off, as it were.

The moment is a difficult one but it is not an impossible one. It is not the first time that we are facing difficulties and I believe that it is within our capacity to respond creatively to these difficulties and to make sure that there will still be a future, if only for the short and medium term in sugar agriculture.

The difficulties too resulting from liberalisation are bound to impact on our manufacturing sector. It is well known and it has been made clear. I sometimes get the feeling, and this has nothing to do with the Government, that we still need to carry out the consultation exercises in every sub-sector, again and again. I am not sure that small and medium sized enterprises sufficiently appreciate the implications of liberalisation. The absence of protectionism now and what they can do in terms of one, two, three initiatives to make sure that they continue to survive.

I would like to suggest that the whole process of continuing consultations in all the sub-sectors be continued by the Government as part of its responsibility to ensure that everyone in Barbados, all the producers and manufacturers are aware fully of the implication of the economics of globalization and trade liberalisation.

In the meanwhile, it is a very sensible and helpful step that \$5 million have been provided to assist targeted manufacturers. I have no doubt that the Minister of International Trade will ensure that this money is wisely spent and that it goes towards assisting in the process of adaptation and adjustment.

I want to turn for a moment to our tourism and to make the point that as much as tourism was the main engine that drove our economy in the last year, I think that there is still too much dependence on the UK market. We are vulnerable in that market because we are in the hands of tour operators and it is a market dominated and dictated by tour operators. We are vulnerable because after many years you can suffer from fatigue in the market. People may wish to go to Cyprus or to other countries in the Middle East or in an increasingly smaller world, they may wish to go to Russia, though I am reluctant to suggest that Russia will be a competitor for Barbados because of the cultural disharmony. One of the appeals to Barbados to the Englishman is the fact that there is so much cultural harmony that when he comes to Barbados because of the names of places, the language and the laws, he very much thinks that this is his summer home away from England.

Sir, a destination can suffer from fatigue. The currency may lose its value in the particular destination and indeed in the last several months, the problems have fallen, vis à vis the US dollar by some 15 per cent to 20 per cent so that the pound no longer goes as far in Barbados as it used to be. I think that is wrong as a policy to continue to rely so heavily on the English market. We have lost our carriers to a large extent out of Germany. We no longer, I speak subject to correction on this, but I think we no longer have Martinair out of Germany. BWIA has pulled out of Germany but we must continue, nevertheless, to cultivate the German and the European markets. It is important.

Equally, we must not give up on Montreal, Quebec and on Western Canada. The big challenge is how to get from Western Canada to Barbados bypassing Toronto that is the big challenge. We must not relax our energies with respect to the Caribbean market. We must not take it for granted but over fifty thousand fellow Caribbean citizens come to Barbados every year. The biggest challenge of all is the United States market and I am not satisfied that we sufficiently appreciate why is it that we have not, in the last 10 years or more, done as well out of the United States as our neighbours there would suggest that we ought to have done.

I still urge that that diagnostic study be done to find out why is it that we are not doing better out of the United States of America. There are many who think that we have the simple answers that we only have two gateways, one out of New York and another out of Miami. They are others who feel that we do not spend enough on television but smaller destinations with smaller budgets seem to have been getting more out of the US than Barbados.

It seems to me, if I may make a suggestion that we really need to put some greater emphasis on the charter operations. We need to pursue the mega carriers. The only mega carriers in the US now are Continental, US Air, American Airlines and Delta, because what liberalisation did under Jimmy Carter, was led to the creation of more carriers and then it also led to the destruction of most of them, including Pan Am and Eastern Airlines which we in Barbados well know.

The mega carriers have divided up America among themselves and so, for example, you have US Air out of Washington, Philadelphia and Charlotte. You have North West out of Minneapolis and St. Paul. You have Delta out of Atlanta and out of Fort Worth, Dallas and Miami you have American Airlines and we can continue. The point is that the mega carriers have divided up the US among themselves. Each major city is dominated by the mega carrier and we have to hitch our wagon, as it were, to these mega carrier stars and try to get charters in the first instance as we move from the North East, then try to penetrate the West, the Mid West and so on and other parts of the South.

I want to turn my thoughts to the initiatives being taken on HIV/AIDS. That would seem to suggest that we are now at last out of denial in this country and that we have come to recognise that HIV/AIDS is with us and that it has reached epidemic proportions. I made, not too long ago, a full statement on HIV/AIDS, providing the House with the enormity of the crisis in the world. There are some thirty-four million people who are suffering from HIV/AIDS and thirty-one million of them are located in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

There are two or three things that concern me. The first is that I do not think in the initiatives announced, we are paying any attention to the orphans, the children of those who have died of HIV/AIDS. What are we going to do about the orphans and about the families caring for the orphans.

The second thing is that much of the public education aspect of the fight has been emphasized. I do not know if we sufficiently appreciate the enormity of the fight that lies ahead, trying as much by its mission to change behaviour and that fight has got to be conducted with the assistance of all of civil society, in the schools and in the factories, with the help of the Trade Union Movement and employers organisations, non-government organisations and with groups of every description.

2:35 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM:

In particular, myths have got to be buried and misconceptions destroyed. The notion, for example, that AIDS is a public health matter is totally false. It is much more than that. The notion that AIDS is a homosexual disease is totally false again. We have to destroy that myth and that misconception. The notion that only the promiscuous suffers from AIDS, again, is totally misconceived and totally false. All of those myths and misconceptions must be destroyed as part of the education exercise.

For a small country, we have practical difficulties which we must face. We must ensure that our screening clinics remain anonymous. This is always a difficulty in a small society where everybody claims to know everybody's business. We must ensure too that all of the information that is generated is treated in a confidential way or else many who ought to come forward will be inhibited and the result is that they may not be helped in time and as a result may perish prematurely.

I want to say further that much of it is important from a symbolic view point and the power and the status of the Prime Minister's Office should be seen to be behind the initiative. At the end of the day we must have an energetic, well-respected individual who can manage and lead the effort with messianic purpose. Nothing short of that will suffice.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM:

That has nothing to do with a Cabinet reshuffle. I wish my good friend from St. Lucy will not misinterpret the point. This fight must not be led by a civil service department. It is not a routine matter so someone must be chosen to lead this fight. I have already indicated the qualifications of the person who must lead it because the fight must not be conducted at a desk, it has to be conducted out there in the community.

With respect to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, I welcome the attempt to refurbish a hospital that was in obvious need of refurbishment. I welcome the decision that at long last the theatres will be equipped and functional. Barbadians, as I understand it, walking the streets in St. Joseph are concerned about a more fundamental question which the Government cannot duck. That is, who will benefit or should benefit from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital?

There is the perception out there, perhaps not without good reason, that a few consultants in Barbados and their private patients are the main beneficiaries of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. That is a very serious point that I am making. It is not based on anecdotal evidence. There are thousands of Barbadians who have been told by their doctors, that they need surgery, and that ideally they should get it within the next six weeks but if they go into hospital as a non-paying patient the operation would be

done in perhaps 18 months to two years but if they raise X hundred or a thousand dollars by the next week the operation could be done in 10 days. Those operations will be done, not at private institution, but at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

So the questions arise: Is the hospital for the classes or is the hospital for the masses? What role should private consultants be playing at the hospital? Why it is that my people in St. Joseph who cannot pay for an operation would have to wait 18 months or two years to get an operation which they are told by the very doctors who worked at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the surgeons, that if they could pay within a week they could get the operation in two weeks time.

So I am all for the retrofitting of the hospital a new word in the language. When I was a boy, I never heard that word. I am told that it is the United States of America contribution to the language. In the end, for whose benefits should the hospital be equipped for? What role should private consultants play? Why is it that some of the same doctors who are in private practice who own and manage vital equipment in Barbados are in competition with the hospital for the use and management of comparable equipment which they own in their private practices? I hope that I have put that explicitly enough for everybody to understand.

It makes no sense for the Government to take up this large sum of money to retrofit the hospital unless we deal with these issues because in the end it has to be a public institution. We cannot allow any group of consultants to transform it into a private institution, whether in part or in whole, largely for their benefit, when we are financing it for the benefit of Barbadians, the man in the street in particular, who cannot pay to go into a private hospital or who cannot go elsewhere for medical attention. I hope that when Cabinet meets that they would remember what was said by that fellow from St. Joseph and insist that there be an answer to those questions.

I know that my time is running out so I just want to make one final point in the next two minutes that remain. St. Joseph has been without a public works depot for the last year and a half or more. It is perhaps the only constituency in rural Barbados that is without a public works depot. This means that a lot of public works, repairs of roads, cleaning of drainage systems and so on that ought to be done by the depot is not being done. I am tired appealing to my friend, the Honourable Minister of Public Works and Transport. I feel confident that in the course of these Estimates that he will make a statement which will bring comfort to the residents of St. Joseph.

I am going to make one appeal to compensate for that. I want the road repair programme to start in St. Joseph as compensation. Since we did not get a depot and we do not have one although we have over 100 acres of Government own land in St. Joseph where one can be located, I am saying that they should at least start the road repair works this financial year in St. Joseph as compensation. I do not think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have asked for too much. I am sure that my good friend, the Minister of Public Works and Transport will not disagree.

I am much obliged, Sir.

2:45 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am glad that you have accommodated me at this point, but I have made three or four attempts before. I do not know if I was hampered as a consequence of my height, but I am happy that you have recognized me finally, Sir.

I want to be a little more objective not that my colleagues did not speak within their rights of their assessment of what is objectivity. But I believe that sometimes we have to move away from political and incestuous conduct in singing praises exclusively of what marvellous contribution and remarkable leadership and ministerial capabilities have been featured within the last year without subjecting the contributions of the Ministerial Front Bench, the Thursday Club to examination the closed shop that exists on the Front Bench and to make a sober and extensive analysis of what has transpired within the last year.

While one can only concede the fact that the leader of this country will go down in history as the man who dragged this country from political and economic ruin in the early 1990's, one still has to examine if the Estimates and Budget at all strategic points of the final year term have achieved their ultimate objective and impact which was the intention of the leader.

Sir, my intention is not to be critical of any personality, any Minister or Opposition Leader, although I believe that yesterday with Estimates that exceed \$2

billion dollars one would have expected a more extensive and in depth approach coming out of the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, especially since the Honourable Prime Minister took the time to give a world view of the external forces that impact on our economy and the decisions of sovereign states with special reference to the struggle over the charge of special advantages of taxation by Small States. The deliberate manipulation by these international bodies who now see themselves as paternalistic types of international organizations that make international decisions on the approach to local governance. These bodies who are the major agents of the industrial work sit down and make decisions on how trade and industry should be conducted

and how the relationships between sovereign states should function. Underpinning all of that, Sir, is to ensure that they have consumer markets for their goods and they continue to couch all of these provisions, requirements and conditions in a package of nobility.

Sir, I believe that the charge was made that the Opposition Leader who was responsible for the negotiations at that time. One could say, he was rather immature and did not understand the complexity of the conditions of the agreement with the World Trade Organization and the Caribbean or Barbados Government. One can forgive him for that, but he had an opportunity yesterday because in Parliament we expect people to give a very wide focus on issues like this, not exclusively local issues. We do not operate within a vacuum. We operate within the dynamics of the international world. Therefore, what is happening in these international organizations would affect what is happening here in Barbados. One

would have expected him to wrestle with a matter of this kind but that was not the case. Instead, we were subjected to an unlimited test of our capacity to endure rubbish.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, could you rephrase that?

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Our capacity to endure was tested to the optimum while listening to a lot of fallacious and illogical contributions coming from the Opposition side. That was the most unfortunate occasion because all of us are in here to represent the interest of the people. Whether you are the representative of St. John, St. Michael East or St. Peter, we are here to represent the people and not to be extremely critical subjectively or in a partisan manner of a government.

I love the subterfuge and I will tell you why. It places me in a better position because of my historical experiences having the opportunity to traverse, not one dispensation but three, and return to the one which I consider possesses the most progressive thoughts and the most genuine form of leadership in the history of Barbados on the eve of the 21st century. That is also an objective view as much as within a cordial spirit. One can respect both sides, but the reality is when you subject the sides to sober and fundamental analysis, the decision of the electorate is a testimony to the wisdom of the people of Barbados, that is why you had a 26 to 2 majority. You can criticize but if you do not provide an alternative programme, how are you going to take an estimate for the year 2001-2002 of over \$2 billion dollars and translate that figure into effective programmes. At the end of the day, Sir, the questions are: Are we going to spend that \$2 billion dollars in a constructive way to transform the quality of life of the people? Are we bound to a philosophy that the affluent in the society must continue to enjoy all of the benefits of the resources of the land and then a few crumbs will drop off of the mahogany table down to those who are going cap in hand begging and creeping for assistance?

2:55 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Do we subscribe to that type of policy or do we fully support a philosophy that promotes the principle of social justice and equality? That is what is important about this. We have no doubt that the Prime Minister knew what he was doing and that he understands that he has a struggle on his hands, not only within the local polity but also in the international arena. He understands that.

In looking at the Estimates, he put the parameters out carefully. He looked at the general cost of the national programme. He looked at the cost of the individual programmes in the different Ministries. You had an opportunity to make a sober analysis and to criticise and show how you would more effectively carry out those programmes with the sum of money given to you. That was not done.

Two billion dollars! Are we achieving our objectives? Are we having the kind of impact that the programmes set about to achieve? These were all pertinent questions that one would have expected an

Opposition to respond to. That did not occur.

We are not left with a balanced debate coming from the Opposition. Therefore, Government members have to take the objective approach to analysing these Estimates. Sir, anytime that a Government continues to increase or to sustain the level of its social policy, there is no question on where the focus lies because we understand that in a post-capitalist environment on the periphery of the mainstream of capitalism we have to provide a cushion, a safety net, for those vulnerable people who are marginalised by the very principles of capitalism itself.

In a capitalist environment, there will always be marginalised people because it thrives on a reservoir of cheap labour. That is a reality. This will always be, and unless a strong element of a socialist agenda is fused with capitalism, then the society itself would have rigid divisions between rich and poor. That is extremely clear to anybody with basic commonsense.

What is progressive about this Government, Sir, is that we did not wait like Franklin Roosevelt during the period of the Great Depression to introduce any new deal. This is not a Government of reaction. This is a Government with a proactive approach because it is based on a sound philosophy and because we respect the ethos of the African spirit and the whole communal system.

We have an understanding about the role that ought to be played between black brothers and sisters. That, along with the influences of western socialist programmes influenced the thinking of the Prime Minister, the representative for St. Peter, and for sure it is reflected in the character of the Minister of Social Transformation. You see it every day, the way he lives. I say this not only because he is my friend but he is my working colleague. I work with him in the Ministry of Social Transformation. There is nothing that I can teach him. We share ideas. It is because we reason and understand the importance of dialogue.

As a result, the programmes which are initiated by him in the Ministry of Social Transformation are the programmes that touch the lives of the marginalised in the system. This Government was not influenced exclusively by any IDB Report on Poverty. The history of the Party goes back to the 1930's. If you look at the role that the Party has played over the years, you will see that the socialist mechanism for the protection of the under-privileged were put in place long ago. It is only a continuation of that evolutionary process by the Barbados Labour Party.

I would have hoped that we would have been treated to a Democratic Labour Party perspective, the Opposition perspective, on how do you manage a political economy at this point of our history? I want to hear that. Do not allow us to judge you on the failures of the late eighties and the nineties. We would be prepared to listen to a new perspective.

I am hoping that on the next occasion something a little more sober and lucid would be offered to us to look at the comparative value and to see if some of us could be influenced by the direction of another view.

Sir, I want to speak about the Ministry of Social Transformation a little. I should hope that I am not encroaching too far on the decisions of the Ministry because I think that the Minister will probably speak to some of these areas a little later in the day or sometime during the session.

The development of the Urban Development Commission. It is a relatively new department and is still growing and meeting some difficulties but we have had as a result of the evidence, the observable phenomenon in the public domain in the form of housing, not what anybody tells us or anybody's opinion or perception but what we have witnessed. The empirical evidence is there that we have transformed the lives of many homeless people in buildings or structures which were classified in a very dignified way as a shelter and put them into modern housing, not only for senior citizens but also for young destitute mothers and fathers and their children. There has never been a programme in housing of that type that has moved at the pace to redress these difficulties in the lives of vulnerable people under any other dispensation in the history of Barbados.

3:05 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

The Urban Development Commission is not only doing that but it is working close with the Ministry and other non-governmental institutions in putting programmes in place especially under the Relief 2000 programme where people can come to the Ministry with difficulties. The officer carries out an extensive social investigation, not encroaching in any way on sensitive areas of their privacy, and they are guaranteed that the information will be exclusively for the purpose that it was taken. Then the Ministry sets about on a holistic approach to try to resolve the difficulties of the individual or the family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we not only provide houses but we provide a counselling programme. We also put them in contact with other agencies because it is an interdepartmental programme and we reach out to other departments and ministries outside of the Ministry of Social Transformation and work collectively to rescue those individuals from their state of distress.

This is a programme that teaches young men who have the aptitude for improving their education and skills - that natural ability and attitude to work. Sir, we give them an opportunity to improve themselves. We put them into skill training programmes, send them to the polytechnic and direct them to NGOs that have special programmes. We keep a list of the NGOs like the Pinelands Creative Workshop and the Israel Lovell Foundation who have tested records and who have special programmes with professional staff. All of these things are done in the Ministry of Social Transformation. We direct them for assistance, monitor the programmes and make an evaluation of the achievements of the particular individual.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also put them in job placement programmes as well. The officers check with hospitality industries and other industries. They contact the Personnel Managers and try their best to place the individual in an atmosphere which is conducive to his capabilities. This is a comprehensive programme coming out of the Urban Development Commission.

Sir, I do not want to speak about the Commission alone because there are other departments under the Ministry of Social Transformation and there are plans for fundamental changes to be made in these other department.

Sir, I must say this because this is my honest opinion. The Department of Community Development was suffering with inertia and the Minister got together with the experts and set about to convert those community centres into resource centres. There were very few planned programmes within the centres unless the programmes were conducted by non-governmental bodies. If you go to most of the so-called community centres around the island, non-governmental bodies would be conducting the programmes within the centres and the community development officer visited occasionally like a health inspector.

Sir, it will not be like that anymore. The officer is required to spend some time with the leader of the community group having some idea of what are the desires of the community, what are the factors in the community that will give rise to a programme that can be helpful to developing the whole theme within the community.

Sir, the centre will be fitted with computers in the very near future so that technology can reach down to the masses in the society who are penniless in some cases and are unable to pay for those classes within private institutions. It is clear that this is a Government with a social conscience. This programme will compliment what is happening within the Ministry of Education with EduTech 2000 and beyond.

Young men who travel on Clapham omnibus, or by public transport to the Ivy or Carrington Village, will have access to the facilities of those resource centres that exist at present and the additional ones that are being provided as a result of the sums of monies that are within the Estimates.

The resource centres are not limited because they will teach other skills as well. There is the airbrush programmes and art programme. These programmes have an appeal to a sector in our community at the mass base level but also in relation to gender. While some programmes seem to attract more females, these programmes are more appealing to the male sector in the community because we have a responsibility to assist those young men on the block who have been marginalised and who they claim are in crisis.

Sir, I want to make a final point. Our respect for our own kind in the Ministry goes beyond that because we have set about to rename buildings after persons from the community who made meaningful contribution, people who invested their labour in production and got no reward in the end. Those persons will be placed in a position of immortality. Their lives and names will live on long after they have deceased. I am hoping that the Minister responds to my request for renaming the Ivy community Centre after Mr. Noel Prescod.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

He is of no relation to Trevor Prescod, whatsoever. He is a young man who made a major contribution to community activities in planning and coordinating programmes.

Sir, I am sorry that I will not get a chance to make mention of my concerns about the civil service highjacking the programmes of the state because the civil service highjacks the programmes of the state in more than one way. Sir, you go and ask for assistance at the Ministry of Housing or the National Housing Corporation, you will ask if there is land in a specific location and officers in the National Housing Corporation will tell you there is none. A few days later, the same officer will provide land in the same location to individuals who could not get assistance through the representative of the constituency.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Your time has expired. You will get a chance to speak again later.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Sir, I am much obliged to you for your patience.

3:15 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to make my contribution and to endorse the submissions by the Honourable Minister of Finance yesterday but I would like to preface my remarks by making reference to a point which the Honourable Member for St. Joseph made during his presentation in apparent practice of some medical professionals in terms of their use of the facilities at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the treatment of patients.

I do this against the background of a painful and personal experience I had recently when a young man faced with a life threatening medical situation and under the care of a medical professional here in Barbados, required, as a matter of seeming urgency, that surgery is performed to address his problem and was advised that there would be a cost attached in the sum of \$15 000, which of course the young did not have. He called to me, since we went to school together, for some help, not financial but for sort of intervention which might make it possible that he could receive the necessary treatment and address of his problem without such cost.

He was astounded when he was advised that the actual procedure could be done at the QEH without incurring such cost. He was advised to speak to his doctor on that issue and having done so he was told what the Honourable Member for St. Joseph suggested. That is, yes it can be done at the QEH, yes it can be done without incurring such costs but it would have to wait a matter of months. If it is to be done, as suggested, it could be done in a couple of weeks but you have to pay the cost. This is a reality. This is somebody to whom I actually spoke. This is a situation of which I am personally aware. I support what the Honourable Member for St. Joseph has said.

I got a little bit of flak yesterday for suggesting that there is a tendency on the part of some in the

clerical field, and by clerical I mean in ecclesiastical terms, to exploit unfortunate situation affecting poor people to their profit. I said that a few days ago and I got some flak but I know that to be true. I do not think that this is a general feature of life at the leadership level of the church but it is true in some circles.

I said that to suggest that there needs to be some greater measure of scrutiny under which persons who operate in the medical profession and, without any apology to anyone here present, in the legal profession who are exploiting poor people in this country to their financial advantage and unjustly so. This is a reality which we face. It is true in the medical profession, it is true with some quarters in the legal profession and it is true in some sections of the clerical community of the church. I do not make any apologies for saying that.

I have served in my church as Senior Pastor for 15 years. I have not taken a cent in salary or remuneration of any form or allowance from my church so I can speak without fear of contradiction. I can speak from a position where I know that operation for profit is not the way I do things. No allowance, no salary or no remuneration of any sort. My vehicle is not provided by the church; my utilities are not paid by the church; my children are not educated by the church or my housing is not provided by the church. I refuse to take that from the church.

I have worked to support myself and the Lord has blessed me. My wife works for a poor teacher's pay and I used to work for a poor teacher's pay and then I did a little bit of management for not very much more pay. I think that together the two of us have been able to make that work and I am satisfied with that. I have sought through the church to serve the poor working class and I do not see the need to seek to exploit their unfortunate situation. I concur with the Honourable Member for St. Joseph on that matter.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that one of the most primary responsibilities of any Government is to guard well and to guard the sovereignty of the nation. I believe that the responsibility of any good Government and any good Barbados Government is to ensure that in this country we never again revert to the place where Barbados is a serf state. We have long left those days of colonialism behind. Barbados is no longer a serf state and the basic responsibility of any Government this time is to ensure, in my view, that we do not return to the days when we become a serf state in the international community. Sovereignty is sacred and must be guarded well.

I think that it is an important view to be repeated in the context of examining the presentation of the Honourable Minister of Finance. The safe guarding of our sovereignty is not only achieved through ideological posture. It is not simply a matter of having a proper political philosophical orientation and on the basis of that developing a national ideology which holds you in good stead in this world. It is not only achieved through strategic international relations, though that is important and though that is, in fact, a very important part of the undertakings of the present administration. It is certainly not only achieved through the security of our democratic liberties, as important as they are, but through the safe guarding of our sovereignty especially in today's world has very much to do with prudent economic management as well, prudent management of the economy.

I think if an indictment were to be laid against the former administration of the Democratic Labour Party and to be expressed in very brief words, it would be that it was less than prudent in the way it managed the Barbados economy and as a result had us on the way towards, perhaps, becoming a serf state again in the international community. That is what we become once we fall into the merciless hands of the international lending institutions.

A former Prime Minister once suggested that the economy was heading for the rocks. That is another way of putting it. I am suggesting that we were falling into the merciless hands of international lending and financial institutions which would have subjected us to the status of serfs in the international community. Therefore, the responsibility of any Government in this modern time is to exercise prudent management in terms of the economy. I believe that the presentation of the Estimates by the Honourable Prime Minister should be examined against that backdrop.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael East referred to this time as a post-capitalist time and people have referred to it in all types of ways. I personally see it as a super capitalist era because we live in a day where capitalism manifests itself in very extreme forms and vulnerable states and vulnerable economies such as ours, if they are not careful will find themselves the subjects of a new kind of marginalisation.

3:25 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

The Honourable Minister of Finance seemed to me to be suggesting that what he was attempting to do with his presentation and the policies and programmes offered in that presentation was to employ the use of sound fiscal management towards the expansion of the Barbadian economy. And certainly that must be the way to go.

Following on from the Budget presentations of the past few years, following on from the obviously working successful economic policies employed since 1994, at this stage, one would want to see the growth to which we have now become accustomed, sustained over the next several years.

It is very easy having experienced growth to come to a point where, if you are less than prudent in terms of the fiscal measures that you employ, if you are less than prudent, even in terms of monetary policy, you could find yourself coming to a place where the growth gains are reversed. I think that has been the experience with which we have been familiar in recent times. And so the effort is being made as I understand it, to ensure that the growth of which we now boast and to which we have now become accustomed is sustained over time. An effort is being made to so bolster the economy as to ensure that it can withstand the pressures which are operating in the global economy in that super catalyst economy that exists around us at this time.

One does not have to look very carefully and one realises that there has been some erosion of the traditional motors of the economy. One does not have to look too carefully and one recognises that there are threats to the newer engines of the economy. One cannot throw up one's hands and suggest that it is beyond us. A small developing, vulnerable state in an international era of economic hostility, must still be able to find ways to sustain itself. And I understood that to be the general thrust of the presentation yesterday, of the Honourable Prime Member.

Some of the threats about us are natural. They arise out of the natural economic ethos that obtains around the world and some of them are contrived. Whether they be natural or whether they be contrived, the Government has to be able to deal with these threats. One of the natural pressures is the obvious decline and continuing decline of sugar prices in the world today. That has been admitted and it is known by all.

Sir, the sugar industry is nowhere near as robust, as productive or as profitable as it used to be. Do examine that issue in the context of persisting elevated costs, then one has to be able to find alternatives which are sustainable and which can pick up the slack as a result of falling sugar earnings.

Even in changing times, sugar has developed a dependency posture in terms of its financing. Those involved at the higher levels of the sugar industry continue to see their salvation in the Government subsidy. One would have to acknowledge there is a limit as to how long the Government can go on offering the types of subsidies it has to the sugar industry. One would have to acknowledge that there is a limit as to how far Government can go in terms of subsidising an industry which does not generate levels of foreign earnings that it used to and which does not generate the levels of local employment that it used to, as well.

I heard the Prime Minister and Honourable Member for St. Peter suggested in his presentation that the earnings from sugar now are not even sufficient to pay the Government's wage bill for one month. That is a very telling point, Sir, and an issue which certainly must be addressed. Even though sugar continues to employ about three and a half thousand persons, from my vantage point in terms of having some knowledge of immigration trends, I am aware that of those three and a half thousand workers now employed in the sugar industry, there are growing numbers of foreign nationals. There are persons who are now involved in sugar agriculture as well as other forms of agriculture, who are non Barbadians.

Sir, I think the point which used to be offered before that the sugar industry should be subsidised because there is a high component of Barbadian labour depended upon that, has been somewhat diluted as a point and that must also be carefully examined in that context.

We are in the process of rationalising the industry and again I heard the Honourable Member for St. Joseph suggest at some point in time and though not as knowledgeable as he is, obviously, on these matters, it seems to make sense to me that with the rationalisation of the sugar industry and the decline of the industry in terms of land being used for the growth of sugar cane, more and more land is becoming available, going out of sugar production. Therefore, it seems advisable, as he has suggested that a careful study ought to be done as to the rate at which that land is becoming available, and will become available over the course of time.

This is very important in the context when we debate a lot in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber in the public arena about the use of land in Barbados and land use policy in Barbados. I definitely support the view that our lands, those going out of sugar production and our lands in general, must always be used for the best economic purpose.

With reference to sugar cane and the land becoming available as a result of the decline, one must not and cannot concern oneself with the best economic use. I think the agro-ecological value of the land is also an important consideration.

I should tell you that I worked in agriculture as well, both in Barbados and abroad to support myself through studies. I think land going out of sugar cane production has implications for the use of that land with reference to other forms of agriculture and vice versa. I am talking about agro-ecological use but also the environment and aesthetic value of sugar cane lands in Barbados. I think the production of sugar cane over time, especially when the sugar cane fields are in full bloom, have lent a lot to the aesthetic appearance of Barbados and by their very presence have contributed to the beauty of Barbados, as part of the attraction of this place as a tourist destination. If one looks at it from the air, the view becomes evidently one which conveys to us that the presence of sugar cane has significantly enhanced the beauty and outlay of this land. Therefore, we ought to give careful study to what happens in a situation where that land is becoming more and more available and less in use for sugar cane production.

One of the pressures mentioned already, of course, is that of liberalisation and globalist tendencies. There are the international and regional realities of treats to manufacture and threats to agriculture. I think we have seen the sad manifestation of some of this already and some very recently here in Barbados. And the new threat of course, to economies which are trying to develop themselves along the lines of service-based economies, such as Barbados, the international realities and even the regional realities constitute a significant threat.

3:35 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

It becomes an even more complex situation when we recognise that some of the threats we are facing now are in the direction of traditionally sheltered services. The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs has given me the honour to speak both locally and regionally on his behalf, on behalf of the Government and by extension the people of Barbados on the area of postal services. I have been exposed, therefore, to some of these things and have some understanding as to the degree of threat which is now offered to traditionally sheltered services such as postal services in Barbados.

Reference has been made in this debate to the establishment of the Protocols attendant upon the CARICOM Single Market and Economy such as the right of access under Protocol II, and indeed beyond simply the right of access the right of establishment under Protocol II. These stipulations

constitute in themselves significant opportunities for threats to be made upon or impact to be had upon services which traditionally have been sheltered in Barbados, such as postal services.

Those who penetrate these traditionally sheltered markets, do so not in the interest of providing a universal service, do so not in the interest of facilitating necessarily the passage of mail across the local circuit, but because they want to come in at the high-end value of the services and, therefore, destroys what exists in terms of the local traditional entity serving these respective areas of endeavour.

I support the view that any movement toward liberalization must be gradual and must involve some degree of a measured step, liberalization within the regional context first, before we move with undue haste toward wholesale liberalization. Those provisions on international agreements and even under regional agreements that allow for gradual liberalization, I believe, should be adopted.

There is the pressure on the United States of America economy and its downturn even today. This morning, very early, I was watching the news about the continuing tumble of the stock market and even technology. This is a serious thing. Perhaps, this is part of a cyclical downturn but it is a downturn nonetheless. Therefore, I am suggesting that there are some implications for Barbados and the Caribbean economies.

There are both in a tax cut but nobody knows what the level of that tax cut is going to be. I am not an economist so I cannot speak with authority on these matters but I can submit an opinion that comes out of commonsense. In any event, it seems to me that a tax cut, of itself, does not necessarily suggest economic recovery. Tax concessions in themselves do not generate economic recovery. We can cast our minds back to 1986 to the tax concessions of 1986 which by 1988 were said to be carrying the economy, the ship, toward the rock. So a tax cut in itself does not necessarily suggest anything.

I believe one has to consider what other available capital there is existing in the economy. One has to consider what is the under-utilized factory or manufacturing capacity existing in the economy. One must consider what other obstacles exist to investment because some of those obstacles might very well be regulatory. So we cannot just put hope in a tax cut or in a tax concession to be the salvation of our economic soul. These are some of the pressures facing the Barbadian economy at this moment.

The Honourable Minister of Finance outlined what I thought was a reasoned approach in terms of the concerns by that bullying club - and I say a bullying club - known as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with their neo-colonialist posture. I am very happy to hear the Honourable Member for St. John say that that approach must be seen, viewed and accepted as a Barbadian position and not as Barbados Labour Party's position. I believe that this is the way in which we must face the world. Our Prime Minister has been prominent in the fight and struggle against these economic bullies of international capitalism in their new thrust to depress and marginalise the economies of developing states such as our.

The economy obviously has been 'pretty' well managed. We can refer to the level of international reserves set in the 23 weeks of store, which is two times the accepted international level. We have achieved this without significant external borrowing. Some may dispute that, but that is my understanding. We have achieved this in spite of an unfavourable balance of trade with some of our Caribbean neighbours and some of the international economies. We have achieved this without undue

curbs on the appetites of our people.

Our unemployment levels continue to decline. I am very happy to see that the level of unemployment among females is now down to 12 per cent and that is a trend we would like to see continuing. Whatever might be said in terms of the levels of incomes which might be generated by those who work, it is better indeed to have people who are in meaningful employment rather than to have them unemployed.

The non-trading sector which has been criticized as being part of the engine of growth continues to grow of course. It is oriented toward an objective of providing for a stronger and more robust productive sector. If our non-trading sectors can grow to the extent that they could enhance our exchange earning capacities, I say let them grow. I think that ought to be the way we view this.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, could you wind up please?

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

I want to close by commending the Honourable Minister of Finance for his presentation. I applaud the focus which is given to the enhancement of the social fabric of our country and the emphasis on human security which is coming through with prominence as a theme, I think that is very critical, and the social development plans right across this spectrum in terms of education and health and the continuing objective of full employment.

3:45 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

I heard the Honourable Member for St. John suggested that the eight years of growth manifests itself in a consolidation of wealth among a small community of the affluent; but when I look out there I see a growing middle class. You cannot have it both ways. If there is a consolidation of wealth among the more affluent, it means that people are not moving from the upper class down to the middle class and if the middle class is expanding, it means that people are moving from the working class into the middle class.

I do not see any tendency on the part of people out there to temper their appetite for consumption. The demand for housing continues. The demand for consumer durables and items continues. I do not see any dampening of the appetite to spend out there so I do not know that I can support a view which suggests that the wealth is consolidated in the hands of a few.

I could go on to speak with reference to law and order and these things but I would not want to steal the thunder of the Minister of Home Affairs and Attorney-General, whom I believe would have

something to say about the continuing decline in the incidence of crime and the continuing support of the Government for resources to help in the fight against law and order.

Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in this Session on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. I want to start by saying that it is okay for one who is well privileged to say that the economy is doing well, but I would take my gauge from the spokesman on the other side who bragged today that the imports of Barbados have declined. It is okay to look at it on one side but that can easily be interpreted that the masses of Barbados are not buying as much as they used to, because they do not have the capacity to buy. It is clear to one and all that if there is a decrease in the amount of goods imported into Barbados it would have to be the amount used by the masses in Barbados. When one looks at the appetite of the rich in Barbados, one recognises that the rich are still buying expensive items for their homes. That is where I would like to start, Sir.

We must understand, Sir, that even though we are bragging and we are saying that the economy is doing well, we have a scenario as it stands before me today and I am holding the Estimates for 2000-2001 and from 2001-2002 and I am saying, Sir, that the estimated excess of total expenditure over current expenditure happens to be \$317 million. That is in 2000-2001. When I look at the Estimates for 2001-2002, I am seeing a deficit of over \$400 million.

Anybody knows that if you are operating anything and you are continuing to build deficits that those deficits will have to be financed at some point in time. What we are seeing, Sir, is the recurring decimal, where every year we are having deficits.

One would have thought, Sir, that if the economy is doing well at least the current revenue would provide something to impact upon the total capital expenditure. Only two years ago, you saw that scenario when VAT was introduced, that was the only time that you saw where the current revenue provided finances for the total capital expenditure.

What we are having in this country, Sir, is that Government every year is running deficits and those deficits have to be financed by local borrowing or by external borrowing. I am going to say to this House that we are going to come to a stage where we will have to smell of the coffee. Let me say that if we do not create the capacity for growth in this country that is real, we are going to continue to fool ourselves and we are going to pat ourselves on our backs, giving the impression that everything is well.

It is okay to come in here and say that the productive sectors are producing and to use tourism as an example. I have already explained to this House that the statistics used in the calculations of growth for tourism are fictitious. Let me tell you why.

When a Minister can get on the Floor of this House and tell this House that plane loads of people are coming to Barbados and when they land at the airport they are placed in buses, taken to the seaport, they get on the ship and when they come back to Barbados they are included in our total tourist arrivals, then I am saying, Sir, that the tourism figures are fictitious, because I am telling you that you cannot count intransit tourists as tourists in the productive sector of this country.

We are fooling not only ourselves but we are also fooling the international lending agencies who will use those same statistics to prove to us that we should not get soft loans. You are not only fooling Barbadians but you are fooling yourselves and when you come in here and say that the World Bank and the IADB are not prepared to give you concessionary loans, it is because of the propaganda provided by you, and that is a warning for those who can understand what I am saying.

I am sure, Sir, that the Honourable Member for St. James North understands quite well what I speak of because he has the capacity to understand things that are figures related.

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

On a point of order. Just to mention that the IADB and the World Bank, whatever the Honourable Member thinks of them, would hardly act on propaganda.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

What the Honourable Member for St. James North is saying is that you could fool them for one or two years for now but when the real crunch comes you have the situation that they will realise that the figures are fictitious and they will disbar Barbados from any future lending. I thank you for that point. The Honourable Member being a Coleridge & Parry boy would have provided me that impetus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot continue to fool ourselves that the economy is doing so well when every minute we have to find ourselves on a plane jetting overseas to borrow money to prop up current accounts. If you are running a deficit on your revenue and your expenditure it is quite obvious that that financing gap has to be provided for somewhere. If your expenditure exceeds your revenue that is exactly what is happening.

It is okay for everybody to say that we are doing well and the foreign reserves are good, but the truth is that the man in the street is not feeling those goods. I am not saying that the economy is not doing well for some because if you check the fellows at Sandy Lane, you would believe that Barbados is the richest place in the world. Their lifestyle is so good that you cannot believe that those same people are living in a country where the masses are living.

Sometimes we ask ourselves why we have a crime problem and I have already said to this House that if one looks at the lifestyle in the Sandy Lane area and then one could relate to what is going on the 'block', one could totally understand why we will continue to have a particular problem in this country. Those guys who have money are behaving in this country as if everybody has money like them, they are driving around, showing off on poor people, oppressing some poor people and then they do not expect a reaction.

I have already warned this Parliament that if tourism is supposed to be the main engine of growth in this country that hoteliers must be told, even though somebody in here said that the jet skis still belong to the guys on the beach, which is foolishness. Can you believe that because a man is still driving a jet ski that he is the owner? That is foolishness, for the simple reason that you can pass by Mullins and see chairs and still believe that because a black man is carrying those chairs on the beach that they are owned by the man who is taking the chairs on the beach.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member made an assumption a minute ago which he should substantiate. He said that Government is running all around seeking funds to prop up the current accounts. That should be substantiated by some fact. I wonder if the member is prepared to let us know where those facts are from.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

That is not my job. I cannot teach you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not my job to teach a Minister how to look at these Estimates and understand. It is not my job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Honourable Member would only look at page 2 he might understand the Estimates and what I speak of. It is not my job to do it but if he asks me, I would do him a favour but remember, Sir, this is the same Minister who sits in Cabinet and listens to the Prime Minister explain how he is going to finance the gap and the capital expenditure gap also.

May I get back my two minutes that I wasted on the member?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Proceed!

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must understand that the Prime Minister of Barbados has an idea on how he will get foreign reserves for this country which he has touted and practised. No one can fault a Minister of Finance for looking for the best possible way that he thinks is right for the country to get foreign reserves.

I am going to say, Sir, that the Minister of Finance was fortunate because we had a debate in here called the Returning Nationals debate, where I provided the Minister of Finance with a logical solution on how to generate foreign exchange without necessarily removing the ownership of land from Barbados. I will explain to this House exactly what I said during the debate on returning nationals.

I said to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that we have a large number of Barbadians living overseas who have amassed a certain amount of capital and pensions and that we needed to find a way to attract that capital to Barbados. I said to him that it is no way that we have an interest rate of five per cent on savings and the United States or England are paying six per cent. We could easily ask Barbadians to come back to Barbados and offer them six per cent. I said that what we needed and have to recognise is that there is going to be a cost. This is very important, Sir. There is going to be a cost to the country in getting that capital to Barbados.

I personally think that the mass of people of Barbados do not mind paying an additional charge to those people by offering them two per cent more than what they get where they are now to bring what they have to Barbados. Do not let us fool ourselves. There are a lot of Barbadians living elsewhere who have a lot of money and who would like to come back home because of a lot of them do not like bearing the snow on their backs.

If we create the right economic climate for those Barbadians to come back home, we could encourage

them to bring their capital back home. That is not all, along with what they have in the banks right now the majority of Barbadians have also worked long enough to get a pension which means that you are not only getting their bank accounts but you have a constant flow of capital into the country by means of pensions.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central can bear me out on this. Because of his years in England, he knows the inflows from his pension, et cetera and how much money he was able to bring back to this country and invest in the country. So I am saying, just using the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central as an example, multiply that figure by the number of Barbadians living elsewhere.

All I am saying is that we do not necessarily need to go and look for a man coming in with a suitcase and a large sum of money because when you think about it we also have to cater for those Barbadians who want to come back home. If we continue to sell the land to people who have no connection to Barbados we are going to find that we get an inflow of investment one time but we are going to deprive ourselves of a constant inflow that we could easily get from those people who have their navel strings buried here and they have a commitment to this country.

When people say that we do not have an alternative, I am saying that it is not true. We must be prepared to offer those same concessions to those people who were born in Barbados and who are of Barbadian parentage and want to have a relationship with this country, but there is going to be a cost and I am saying that the banks in Barbados will have to be subsidised by the taxpayers of Barbados for that additional cost. To me, it is better for us to pay the additional charge in interest than to give our lands to people who do not maximise the usage of our lands because some of those people will build houses in Barbados and will spend six months in and out of Barbados.

Sir, we can also encourage those people who are still living and working overseas to build their homes in Barbados. I always say that if there is something lacking in the Ministry of Tourism, it is the lack of foresight because every time you speak about community based tourism and the capacity of the community based tourism to generate tourists that other people feel that they do not need in Barbados the Ministry of Tourism seems not to understand what you speak of.

If our tourism product is to go anywhere we must recognise that tourism in Barbados can no longer be for a "too few". It must be for one and all and that is why I will continue to say that the community based tourism project must be priority number one in Barbados. The Minister of Tourism cannot feel happy to know that he would be spending \$30 million to promote Barbados to go into the pockets of only one group. That \$30 million must be spread right across Barbados. If you want a proper and sensible tourism project and strategy then that must be the one to be adopted.

I do not believe in this myth that we should only look at the millionaires because the millionaires can go wherever they want but if we provided the right climate the poor man from the streets of London and America could easily be attracted to Barbados provided the prices are right.

4:05 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

Let me say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is okay for people to say that when the rich people come here that they spend a lot of money. The truth is, when that money is spent it is not circulated within the economy the same way as when the poor come to Barbados. When poor people come to Barbados, that money it is spent throughout Barbados and every small man, woman or child has the opportunity to feel some of that foreign exchange in their hands. Sir, we feel that when it comes to foreign exchange only an elite group can enjoy it and that the masses who work so hard to develop the industry in the country should not benefit from their hard work and their foreparents' hard work.

I also want to warn this Honourable House that we are seeing a very dangerous scenario being played out in this country. I have criticised the Prices and Incomes Protocol and some people have said to me that I am been anti-union. I want to make this quite clear that I cannot be anti unions when the unions are supposed to be representing the masses of people in Barbados. I was warning the unions that if they did not ask for their share of the cake that they would have found themselves in a situation where instead of having a three-sided triangle that the workers would have fallen from the triangle and then you would have one relationship because the two would come together.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that we have a situation in this country today that I never thought that in the month of March, 2001 that I would be on the floor in this House admitting that what I told this House would have come through so quickly.

Let me give you a good example, BET. After the Prices and Incomes Protocol that have helped them to amass so much money in this country, those wretches are now telling the 250 employees, through their union, they went to a bargaining table and said that they have to amass profits to expand the economy of Barbados and to give the Government taxes, they are now saying to the workers, after they have done so much for the company that they are no use and to go home.

Can you imagine this Mr. Deputy Speaker? You are talking about a scenario where the workers, the Government and the private sector, Sir, sat down in an arrangement and the workers felt that they were part of that arrangement, although I warned them that they were not, now the chickens have come home to roost and now that there is no need for the workers anymore, instead of giving the increase as they normally would have got, they are now going home with nothing to invest. The Government got all the taxes that they wanted and BET was able to make all the money they wanted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that I am now hearing talk about another Protocol and that it should soon be coming to Parliament. Sir, you know my vote already because that relationship started very well but from the time there was a change of Government, everything went wrong. I am tell you not to look for my support. I am telling the union in this country that I support them in the stance that they are taking because they recognise what I said, but if they were mad enough to come and sit down with the employers and Government and work against the workers of Barbados they cannot say that they did not

know. The evidence is there, Sir.

Do you know what is worst about the BET scenario, Sir? One would have thought that the BET would have said to Barbados Workers Union to form a company like UCAL, which was formed at the Transport Board and let the workers do the work. Do you know what happened, Sir? The company was formed before the workers were laid off. Are you aware of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Sir, because you see telephone company vans driving around Barbados, that does not mean they do not belong to the Barbados Telephone Company. They are privately owned. Do you understand what I am saying, Sir? The workers who were expected to be laid-off were waiting to form a company to get the work from BET, that work has already been given to a private company. I want the Barbados Workers Union to understand that their plan sounds very good but the work is already gone.

Sir, the truth is that BET cannot be blamed for everything. The Government of Barbados will have to take some of this blame for the simple reason that the Barbados External Telecommunications ...

Asides.

4:15 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

The Barbados External Communication must understand that I see - and I hope that the Government would see - them in this same light too - that the services they are providing are not just a simple Internet or telephone services, but it must be seen how a manufacturer would see it as a raw material. Because of e-commerce and all the other things that would now have to be computed into the input cost. I want the Government to recognise that in the same way it is important for them to get involved in the Pierhead Development Project, they must recognize how important the telecommunication sector is to Barbados and it is a part of the input cost. It is the lowest possible input cost to be transferred to the private sector of Barbados to allow them to make a profit and to be able to compete overseas.

I do not think that should be too difficult to the Front Bench because there is still a number of them with the capacity to understand what I am saying. I can see the Leader, the Deputy and the future nodding their heads.

I am saying Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to recognize that the way we saw BET in 1994, it cannot be seen in 2001. In 1994, e-commerce was not important, in 2001

e-commerce is important. The way we market our tourism cannot be the conventional way where we go to North America and pick up some people and give them money to market our tourism. We must use the Internet service to develop our tourism and to help promote Barbados, not only for the rich but

for every single person who wants to be part of the tourism product.

I think the BET must understand that they must carry out an educational programme to teach Barbadians how they can develop Internet sites to help Barbados develop the community based tourism. There was a time when one could tell a man who had a vacant house in St. Lucy that it is possible for him to attract tourists but because of the technological changes that man can now promote his house in St. Lucy without paying someone to market that house for him.

We must understand that Government cannot continue in the same way that they did it in 2000 and before. I want this to be heard in here now, this is the age of trade liberalization and globalization where the world is becoming more competitive than it was before. Previously certain technological advances were not developed to their fullest and a Prime Minister could sit down in a Ministry and feel good. The truth is, a Prime Minister cannot sit down in Ministry any more with the amount of flying and meetings and the command that he must have of his Cabinet, he now has to see himself as a super minister, overlooking his ministers. And that allows me to get to the point the Prime Minister made yesterday.

I believe that if the Prime Minister had adopted this policy when I first said it, he would not have said that no Government Minister can use the accruing system while practising the cash system. Last night I had to find out what the Prime Minister was saying. The cash system deals with cash, the accruing system deals with something over the limit. I suddenly recognized what the Prime Minister was saying. Do you know what it meant? If the Prime Minister was not caught up in his Ministry of Finance then he would have easily recognized when the Barbados Transport Board awarded a contract for \$500 000 more than what the cash basis allowed. Do you understand what I am saying? The Prime Minister is caught up in the Estimates and he has this big work load sometimes things slip. But the Prime Minister has to understand that as Minister of Finance he is the last person responsible when a minister spends more than what he should have spent, because at the end of the day, it lands back in the Ministry of Finance. The problem is not just with the Minister spending the money, it is with the person who has to provide the money to cover the expenditure by the Minister.

Sir, I can understand the point that the Prime Minister made yesterday about Ministers not using the cash basis and at the same time having the accruing system. In other words you can only spend the money you have, he will not carry it over to another year. What the Prime Minister was saying was that the Minister of Public Works and Transport has created a real problem for him where he gave him \$1 000 000 for insurance and now he has to look for additional money to cover the expenditure incurred in the previous year. Very cleverly said by the Prime Minister of Barbados and I want to congratulate him.

Sir, I want to say and to remind this House, that I have always said in this House that maybe we need to practice the accruing system in accounting in here but I have now recognized that it is already being practised in here.

Gems of Barbados: We were told that the Gems of Barbados would have been the best tourism project in Barbados and that we needed to support it, which we did, now we are being told that it is about to be sold. I have no problems with Government deciding what they want to do with their projects. Do you know what I am worried about? When the Gems of Barbados project is sold what are you going to do with the money, that is what was worrying me again last night. Do you know what I have suddenly realized? I have not see any financing for the Hilton Hotel.

It is clear to me now, that Government recognizing that the Hilton Hotel is more important than the Gems of Barbados decided to sell half or more of the Gems Project to get financing for the Hilton Hotel. If I am wrong, correct me. If that is not true, I would expect you to recognize that there is a place in St. Lucy called North Point and you have all the land that you want. If we are to develop our tourism project the way we should, we should maximize the use of all former hotels. The same way that it was done for the Gems of Barbados, it can be done for North Point. If you feel you do not have the capacity at North Point, there is the old Naval Base that I have always said we need to bring back, to ensure that we can attract the American tourist because of the history as it relates to that Naval Base.

The Prime Minister has also said that the Expenditure on the QEH will now be \$100 000 000. I want to say that it is easy to talk about a hospital as if you are talking about a sugar factory, but the truth is that the QEH cannot be seen in the same light as a sugar factory.

When you are doing the refurbishing work at the QEH you are still going to have patients in that hospital and that is going to create an impact on those patients staying in the hospital. That is why I will always argue that it is better for us to build a second hospital to release the pressure on the QEH, release them of the stress, or even vacate some of the wards on a short term basis to do the work that has to be done, or one might end up creating more health problems for the patients than the ones that are about to solve.

I am saying, Sir, that if we are going to be having an economy based on services, we cannot continue to run a country with one hospital. It is the same thing with the Grantley Adams International Airport, but I will not deal with the airport today, I will leave that for another discussion.

We have to understand where we are going and I have always accused this Government of not recognizing that instead of thinking about today they need to think about tomorrow.

I am happy to say that the Government of Barbados has accepted the DLP's policy on the OECD and it really shows how far they get whenever they listen to us. When we first announced the OECD policy, we were cursed but I am happy to see the tough stance of the Democratic Labour Party is now being floated across the world as if it had originated in the Barbados Labour Party. I do not have any problems. Any of those who went with me in the Bahamas will know the case I put in the Bahamas was so strong that the CNN took it up and ran with it right through the world ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Everybody knows that I am a grand master when I am ready.

Land: Sir, A great man called Errol Barrow once said, "Barbadians are land hungry."

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

That is not true. Bajan are land hungry and he said this in 1964. The great Errol Barrow said that

Bajans are land hungry. The truth is I did not read this when I was telling you all how important land it, I have always said ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Source? "Speeches by Errol Barrow" edited by Yussuf Haniff. This was already made a Document of the House three times, but I am saying Sir, that we must recognize the importance of land.

We must recognize Sir, that on Ward B5 at the QEH the patients could not get a cup of hot water because they had no gas and the nurses had to be calling around other wards to find out which ward ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

That is not propaganda. I do not come with propaganda Sir. That is for you, propaganda is your style, not mine. The nurses had to call around to find out which wards had gas to get hot water to give patients tea.

I am saying Sir, that if the Prime Minister is providing so much money for QEH you should expect better. Do you feel that it is fair for patients to be coming to you complaining that they cannot get the medicine they want and you have to concoct the medicine to give them, Sir? Tell me, that is propaganda now.

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is also amazing Sir, when you look at these Estimates is that there is nothing to shout about because there is only the Urban Development Commission that you have seen an increase of \$5 000 000 and Rural Development Commission, \$7 000 000. The Prime Minister has suddenly recognized the importance of increasing the votes for the Rural Development Commission, because from the time that the Rural Development Commission Bill was brought to this House it was not given the necessary resources to carry out the mandate aspect of it. If Rural Development Commission is to play an important role in the development in the rural constituencies it must have money to work with and I am not even happy with the \$7 000 000. I know some people will tell me that they can get \$40 000 000 for concrete road, but at least that is for concrete roads and I want ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Well, I have already told the Minister ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Do you mean Harmony and Fryers Well? The Minister has already promised me that Fryers Well and

Harmony would have to be fixed. He understands the importance of tourism at Fryers Well and the social impact that it is having on the people in Harmony, so much so that he will fix those roads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would not believe it Sir. I heard people talking about the constituencies that have road problems. I can list 60 roads in St. Lucy and I challenge any other person in this House ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Ask the Honourable Member for St. James North, he can tell you ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

The Technology Programme I am saying Sir to be careful with that. I understand the goodwill of the Minister but if we are to develop Barbadians we need to put the computers in the homes so that the students can teach their parents how to use the computers. In this day of crime we cannot expect parents to leave their houses unattended, to go into community centres when they can easily bring the computers to the houses and can maximize the usage and the cost of the money that is being invested.

Mr. Deputy speaker, I want to say that there is nothing new about these Estimates as they stand. The myth about unemployment will be told at some time because you cannot continue to tell people that more people are working when you are not increasing the total number of persons available to work.

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

No, no, you are not taking up my time, I am closing off.

I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East for the 500 jobs she is about to create at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJJP). She is a very clever young lady. Whenever there is going to be lay-offs in the public sector, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East comes up with a plan to shift those people from looking for work to training and I congratulate her.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

I beg to move that this Honourable House be suspended for 15 minutes.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

I beg to second that.

The question that the sitting be suspended for 15 minutes was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

4:25 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed.

Mr. D. CARTER:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to join my colleagues on this side in supporting the Estimates for the year 2001 to 2002.

It would appear to me that every year, the Prime Minister of this country reaches a type of level which, I do not know when he is going to level off. Before I used to give him an 'A' and now I give him an 'A+' for his presentation. Certainly, as a new Member in this Chamber, I can only say that I was like a student listening to him and I believe all Barbadians were in a similar position, listening to what he had to say about the Estimates.

I realised when the Leader of the Opposition started his reply that, obviously, he had written and prepared that speech, regardless of what the Prime Minister had said. He made sure that he did not really say anything about the economy of this country but had his own agenda. I really admired the Leader of the Opposition for the way he was so fluent in his speeches that certainly the relevant facts that are here, he does not make a reply or an alternative to what is here in the House of Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to start patting ourselves on the back every year because, as we know, the foreign reserves are well over \$1 billion and it is a record in this and we have to keep saying it. We have to let the people of this country know that we are safe and sound. It is said that we have the type of foreign reserves here which can give us about 20 weeks of support in this country.

Quite recently, we were a little worried because of the problems that were going on in this country in relation to things that young people were doing. But I am glad to say that one of the productive sectors, such as tourism, did extremely well and they reached the high level of eight per cent growth in the tourism sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we in this Parliament realise what is being said and done by the Opposition party we have to really think twice and we have to make sure that we keep saying these things to the ordinary people and we must say it day in and day out so that they will understand what is going on.

Here in this country, we are fortunate to have a lot of money being spread around in the various Ministries and I am particularly proud that in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Prime Minister has made a lot of money available. He said previously that over a period of three years, he would make \$40 million available to Barbados for the repair of roads.

Now, you may wonder why I am going straight into this issue. As you know, I am Chairman of Committees and I do not have a second chance to speak and have to really get in issues that are relevant

to my constituency. Although, later in my speech, I may refer to the Sports Council, I have to make sure that certain matters are dealt within my constituency.

Previously, I said that if there are \$40 million made available to Parliamentarians and the Government as a whole, and there are 28 constituencies, when I divide \$40 million by 28, it comes out to one point something million dollars each. I also said that I would like \$1 million for the work being done in my constituency. I identified those areas which are badly lacking and in need of repair. I referred to places like St. Patrick's where there is need for 105 metres of road which really is dear to the people living in that area and I think the time has come where those people should be given a proper road.

Sir, further down in my constituency, in Lodge Road there is a new church to the bottom of that road. But something of importance, people who had made application to the Town and Country Planning for building their homes, they had their blocks, they had their lumber were unable to get permission because there is no road in that area. I think that it is necessary that this Government should do the right thing in helping the people of Lodge Road to get that road, that is, 90 metres of road running through the western part of Lodge Road.

The third area is Vauxhall where I grew up. I was born in that area and it would be foolhardy of me if, as a politician and as a local boy, I did not do something for my own village, Vauxhall. This is 104 metres of road and I think that we should take the opportunity really, to get the road repaired as quickly as possible.

Lastly, in Church Hill where my former opponent Mr. Morris, lives, there is about 18 metres of road and I hope that in the three years remaining that road could be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke about those four areas. I am not a covetous person. I do not want, as we in Barbados would say, Drax hall and Kendal but I am just asking for four little roads to be done in my constituency and I am not really asking for a lot.

Sir, in the western part of the constituency, I saw touted around recently in the newspapers that there may be a change of boundaries and you have to at least use your common sense and do the right things when you are doing things in your constituency.

For the past 15 years, there was a main which ran in the Sargeants Village area beside Regency Park and Sheraton and it enabled Sheraton Centre to have natural gas. Unfortunately, the people in Sheraton and Regency Park never had the opportunity to get natural gas. About eight years ago, they had written to my office enquiring about gas and they said to me then, they were sure that 95 per cent of the people would be glad to have natural gas put in their homes.

The technocrats at the Natural Gas Company said to me that one of the reasons why they do not readily run a natural gas line is because they are not sure what percentage of people would take in the natural gas. So if I am saying that 95 per cent people of Sheraton and Regency Park are going to put in natural gas, I think that the Government must take heed of that and make it a possibility where those people could get natural gas.

Sir, another thing that troubles me is that the main runs in the Lodge Road area and the Newton area is

just to the left and they are also without natural gas. I am just asking the relevant Ministry to have a little compassion and make sure the people of Regency Park, Sheraton and Newton receive this little favour.

As you know, I must also say, thanks to the Ministry of Rural Development. Over the last three or four weeks, they were fairly good making 37 lights available to my constituency. Although there are times when you will be critical, I am happy to say that I received many calls from the constituents who said that they received lighting and I think that was a very good thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you know, I am the Chairman of the National Sports Council and the substantive Minister spoke and he did not speak anything about the Sports Council because he also has a big ministry. We assumed office in this country in 1994 and between 1994 and the present day, I can say that through the goodness of the Minister, we were able to construct 18 pavilions throughout Barbados. We were able to put some in the northern part of Barbados, some in the central and certainly some in the south.

Unfortunately, there are some areas which do not have pavilions. I can say, Sir, in regards to your constituency, Christ Church West Central, that a directive was given by the Minister whereby, four pavilions will be made available this financial year. The Maxwell Sports Club will also receive a pavilion so you could be laughing now for the next few months.

Aside.

Mr. D. CARTER:

You will have your pavilion. The Minister will also have one and certainly somewhere down the road, the other two will be built in some areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this administration did not only build 18 pavilions during the last seven years but in relation basketball courts, we were able to erect fourteen basketball courts and this financial year, we will have an additional five basketball courts.

In these days when you erect a basketball court as you know, you must have lights and I would say that all the basketball courts in the future will have lights. Sir, because of crime, it is said that one of the things to keep the young people mobilised is to have facilities where they can play during the night time.

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. D. CARTER:

I can safely say that in the very near future, certainly this year, we will have the various entities to keep the people of this country happy.

Crime in this country is a big thing and Honourable Members of Parliament have spoken openly about that behaviour in their respective constituencies. Therefore, it is important for the National Sports Council to keep building these various buildings to keep the people happy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, three years ago, just prior to election, the Prime Minister made a sum of money available whereby we could get some land prepared in Cane Vale for a playing field for the Bayer Pride of Gall Hill team but up to this day because of certain technicalities the relevant Minister of Housing and Lands is unable to come to a conclusion in relation to the sale of the land. It is important, this is not an attack on anyone, that we make haste and try to do the right things to make this playing field a reality because it is being said in the area that that was done as an election gimmick. At this stage I would hate to know that I am going to Gall Hill and being told that that playing field cannot come to a conclusion.

Asides.

Mr. D. CARTER:

The Minister of Housing and Lands has heard me. He knows that we are waiting on him for a directive whereby the land at Cane Vale can be acquired as soon as possible and work can be carried out. It must be said that the Bayer Pride of Gall Hill team does not have a playing field. I said in here before that the Foundation School was nice to us in giving us their field to practise on but because of certain unsocialable behaviour which occurred there the Bayer Pride of Gall Hill team can no longer practise there and it is important that a leading club should be able to have a home of their own. If one look at the population in that area one will see that it is very densely populated and it is necessary that those people be given a chance.

In relation to another side of my constituency, I was just informed only a few weeks ago of the possibility where the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture will get a piece of land on another side of St. David's on Staple Grove Main Road, where a school would be built in the very near future to accommodate the South District and St. David's Primary Schools. This is very important because, as you know, for the longest while the people of Cox Road, St. David's and Edey Village were really suffering to have facilities whereby they can play their various games.

It is a little marriage between the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture and the Ministry of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform whereby the Ministry of Education Youth Affairs and Culture will erect the school there and then the Ministry of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform will take over the playing facilities. This will mean that the people of St. David's would no longer have to go to Sargeants Village or further afield to play their games and that would be a great invention for the people in that area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have touched on my constituency in relation to certain things but I must also mention before I go that over the years and certainly over the past two years, I realized that great crowds assembled near the Stadium every Friday night to play night cricket which is fairly admired all over Barbados and as Chairman of the National Sports Council I am going to make it possible for the people of Wotton and the surrounding areas to have lights there at the Wotton playing field where they can also play night cricket and night football. This is important for those people because, as you know, when people are not working it is important that they do something positive and when they play sports this is a

positive direction to go. So all in all I believe that they would be happy.

In relation to agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituency is in the rural area and there is a little fear with the people of St. David's, Cox's Road and Edey Village in relation to what would happen to the agricultural sector there. Over the last 50 years, maybe 100 years, those people lived sumptuously because of a place named Bulkeley. Now through the grapevine and through the technocrats it is said that in the very near future there is a possibility that they may have one mill to grind our canes. Now, it is important, as far as I am concerned, if that should come about that the factory should be placed in the St. George Valley which is still a fertile area and which produces the most canes in this country.

We in the Government realised that it is really difficult to keep employing people who are unable really to keep the sugar cane industry going. In relation to the factory I hope that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development will take an in-depth look as to where he locates that factory if and when the time comes. I would not like to preempt him, he did not speak at length in relation to that but it is in the grapevine and it is being talked about in the area. Certainly, as representative for the area I would like, even when we reach Committee level, for a Minister to give me an idea of what will happen in relation to agriculture in the next three or four years and certainly the possibility where that factory may be located. I would like to be told something so that when I return to the constituency I would be able to tell the people for sure what would be the outcome of such an arrangement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel very comfortable to say that this administration was running the Government for the last six or seven years and we, the various Members of Parliament, have to face the people. I am happy tonight knowing that when I go to my constituency I would not be getting any negative vibes because the people are happy with what is happening in this country, they are certainly happy with the Honourable Prime Minister and by extension they seem to be happy with all their Members of Parliament on this side.

Therefore, I would like to say to my colleagues that they should continue working very hard. I must say something of importance too. We wait until people die to say it but I remember back in 1990 that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West said to me that the very first priority when one first come into politics is service and after that anything can happen.

5:10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. D. CARTER:

Since 1990 I made sure that I give service to the people of Barbados and service to the people of my constituency. I know there is the possibility that certain mistakes will be made. I can say that we are not infallible and I only just implore all the MP's to keep working hard and keep remembering the people of Barbados. Last of all, there is no doubt in my mind, and this is now the halfway stage of governance in this country, that the people seem to be happy and we will continue to do the work in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am indeed grateful for this opportunity to speak on the Appropriation Bill. It is a pleasure for me to speak on this side of the House and to be part of a Government that is really producing and batting like Gary Sobers when he scored 365 runs years, not out years ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the economy of this country, we recognize that not only do we have high reserves and low inflation but we also have unemployment down and, of course, we have excess liquidity in the banking system. I understand that the excess liquidity is somewhere in the region of \$147 million.

I want to start with this as my departure because with an economy doing so well one would expect that the population would have money to spend. They also would want to spend money on real assets. Land happens to be an asset that most Barbadians would want. Housing is indeed an asset that most Barbadians would want. If the demand for housing is great, we have to thank the Government of this country for allowing a situation where the demand far exceeds the supply in the short and medium term.

Sir, I envisage that with the long term programme of the Government that we should not only be able to sustain the present building construction in this country, but we will be able to help and meet the demand within a five or 10 year period.

Sir, the Government's programme is really based on a ten year programme and we said this in 1994 when we came to Government. That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party in coming to office set about to acquire land. Our Prime Minister has already indicated the level of land that has been acquired in this country. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that over the last five or so years the Government has acquired almost a thousand acres which is on record. We have acquired this land for housing and 630.43 acres out of this went to housing and 180 acres went to road improvement. We have to constantly acquire land for road and highway improvement. With the amount of roads that are being constructed in this country, one would imagine the amount of land that has to be acquired.

Now, if one looks at the allocation of funds for the road programme this year, one finds that there is \$77.57 million dollars that will be allocated for road construction. Out of this \$77 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$45.29 million will be allocated for new structures. This means new tenantry roads and new roads which have to be cut such as the Bridgetown By-pass Road for which we have to acquire land. We have to resite people.

Sir, this money will be spent by MPT for their residential programme and rehabilitation programme. It will also be spent by Rural Development Commission in the amount of \$12 million for their road programmes. The Urban Development Commission will spend another \$8 million in their road programme. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry will continue to acquire land and we envisage that we will have to acquire another hundred acres every year for the next five or so years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this will mean coming to Parliament, as we often do, to acquire these parcels from time to time. I envisage that the Ministry will be hard pressed in getting these lands acquired so that the Government programmes can continue.

Now the Leader of the Opposition wanted to know what the Ministry is doing. In fact, he said that some people are only working half-day. I am sure that he is aware of the number of Resolutions that come to this Parliament from time to time. But the Leader of the Opposition must understand that the job of the Ministry of Housing and Lands is not only National Housing. I think that the Opposition tends to think that, whenever you talk about housing and lands, it is National Housing. There is more to the Ministry of Housing and Lands, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than the provider of lots and houses. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition, as a learned attorney, is aware of the security of tenure. I must be at pains to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is more to housing than lots and houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the aim of Government to provide security of tenure, affordable shelter and sustainable shelter. That is the aim of Government. It is this Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has passed the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act in 1980, giving security of tenure to thousands of people. Over 6,000 families benefit from the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, that was passed in 1980 when the Honourable Member for Christ Church West was the Attorney-General. Persons received their lots at 10 cents a square foot. The Opposition does not give the Government credit for that. People can still obtain land at 10 cents a square foot. Nowhere else in this world can people obtain land at 10 cents a square foot. Even the fourth estate, they do not give Government, the credit for these things.

Aside.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

But that does not give security of tenure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the very first amendment for this century was the Plantations Tenancy (Amendment) Bill, which gives urban tenants the right to buy their land at \$2.50 a square foot. We passed it here only a couple of months ago. Persons now can obtain their land at \$2.50 a square foot and Government has not disadvantaged the landlords. Landlords can get their full market value. Of course, this programme is on track with the UDC and I have asked the Ministry to work hand and hand with the Rural Development Commission to push forward the tenancies in rural areas.

There are a number of tenancies in rural areas, for example, in Bournes Village, Gemswick and Jackson. We have other tenancies other than plantation tenancies that will benefit from this programme.

5:20 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

We envisage that another 6 000 persons living on tenancies other than plantation tenancies will benefit from Government programmes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all it is envisaged that more than 15 per cent of all households in Barbados will benefit from Government's tenancies programmes. Yet, the Democratic Labour Party will want to sidetrack the Government's mission in providing shelter in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Barbados is a leader in the world of human shelter. Our living conditions here are on par with most developed countries. I believe that persons in some places will tell you that Barbados is doing well for a small state and we have to be proud of this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only did this administration put mechanisms in place to secure lots at 10 cents and \$2.50 per square foot but this Government has also put the financial measures in place to sustain a housing programme. For the last five years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have put more than \$15 million out of Government's budget for the acquisition of land. The land that the Prime Minister talked about yesterday and the thousand acres of land we are talking about now cost \$10 million. The Democratic Labour Party formed the Government before but housing was not a priority as far as they were concerned. By the end of this financial year this Government would have spent \$15 million on acquisitions alone for housing, recreation, beach access and other things.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central spoke about eighteen pavilions and the Government has to acquire lands for these pavilions. We are acquiring large areas of land for pavilions, hard courts and playing facilities because it is the Government's Manifesto pledge to put playing facilities in every major community. We are not like the Democratic Labour Party. We do not back down from the pledges made in our Manifesto. We pledge that we would put playing facilities in every major community and we are on track for this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to look at other areas of the Ministry because they are very important. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$50 million was spent in 'Settlement 2000', which was done by the National Housing Corporation. We were also able to develop land that was vested in the National Housing Corporation. This \$50 million was spent in developing land, putting in services, roads, proper drainage and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Opposition asked how the Government spent this \$50 million. This money was spent as follows:

Four hundred houses were constructed.

1 025 lots between 3 000 and 5 000 square feet were produced.

1 035 lots between 4 000 and 5 000 square feet were produced.

455 more lots between 4 000 and 5000 square feet are to be provided.

47 commercial lots are to be provided.

104 terrace units were constructed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to say that 104 terrace units have been built in the following areas:

44 at London Bourne

28 at Deanes Town

20 at Flat Rock

12 terrace units are being completed at Bush Hall.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, more than 200 houses are occupied by people at Orange Hill, Mount Brevitor, Rock Hall, Cottage and Groves, Flat Rock and Briar Hall and more than 500 lots have been sold to date.

‘Settlement 2000’ is based on ‘replicability’, that is, we have to replicate what we have started because any successful housing programme is based on ‘replicability’. We hope to go on to develop other sites like Rices in St. Philip and Pinelands in St. Michael because this is what the Government’s programme is all about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that Government did not stop there. Government also money for infrastructural development because this Government believes firmly that if you want a housing programme to be successful that money has to be provided. You have to put the instruments in place to make it successful. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Government reduced the mortgage rate for first-time homeowners the Opposition did not give us credit nor the media did not give us credit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government reduced the mortgage rate from nine per cent to six per cent for first time homeowners. Do you what that this to this country? I will tell you what it has done. When this Government reduced the mortgage rate from nine per cent to six per cent for first-time homeowners for those persons building under \$100 000, it opened up the highway for persons who have never thought they would get a house. People who were paying \$900 monthly ended up paying \$600, persons who were paying \$500 and nine per cent started to pay \$300. People experienced a saving and that is important. The Government must be credited for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we did not only stop there. The figures are here and I make them a document of the House. The records will show that the number of people approaching the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company for mortgages totalled more than \$30 million. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is committed to lending more than \$30 million in this financial year. Out of that \$30 million, \$25 million were committed to people in the six per cent bracket for first-time homeowners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the economy is doing so well that for the next five years the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company has shown that they are committed to lending the following:

Year 2001 - \$30 million

Year 2002 - \$33 million

Year 2003 - \$30 million

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Members of Opposition are saying that we were not lending money. In 1994, when the Democratic Labour Party was in power, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company was lending 69 loans a year totalling \$4.6 million. In 1995 they lent 103 loans, in 1996 they lent 138 and in

1997 they lent 154 loans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from \$4.6 million in 1994, Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is now lending \$26 million per year. Last year, three hundred and sixty-eight persons received loans from Barbados Mortgage Finance Company totalling \$26 million and that is not all.

I remember the Honourable Member for St. Lucy felt that we should not have moved the threshold up from \$175 000 to \$275 000 and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy did not support that. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company lends at the upper end and we have asked National Housing Corporation, through the General Workers' Loan fund, to lend at the lower end so that the National Housing Corporation is now lending loans from \$1 000 up to \$50 000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday that we were lending one loan per month but the records will show in 1989, the Democratic Labour Party disbursed 134 loans, in 1991 they disbursed 68 loans, 20 loans in 1992, 47 loans in 1993 and 53 loans in 1994. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to repeat that the Democratic Labour Party between 1989 and 1994 disbursed 347 loans totally \$2.5 million as compared to the following loans disbursed by the Barbados Labour Party in 1997 the Barbados Labour Party disbursed 76 loans, in 1997/1998 851 loans and in 1998/1999 1 681 loans totalling \$15 million and were disbursed by the General Workers' Credit Fund. In 2000/2001, they disbursed 489 loans totalling \$6 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, between 1995 and 2001 this Government has lent the people of Barbados 3 679 loans totalling \$37.4 million.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I did not hear the total number of loans nor the total value of the loans.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will repeat the figure for the Honourable Member. Between 1995 and February 2001 the National Housing Corporation has lent 3 679 loans totalling \$37.4 million from the General Workers' Loan Fund as compared to \$2 million, which the Democratic Labour Party lent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will make this report a document of the House because the records are here to show that these are facts. I do not where the Opposition got their bogus figures from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the record will show that this Government continues ...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I just want to confirm that the report becomes a document of the House so that I can verify the information.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have pointed out today that this Government provided land at ten cents a square foot and \$2.50 per square foot. They have also provided security of tenure and have put finance in place. What other Government in the history of this country has done a similar thing?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that no Government previously has done what this Government did

in providing a total package for housing in this country. We have provided land, finance and security of tenure. We have a model in this country that any country will want to emulate.

We are going even further because I have not spoken about the land registry. I have not spoken about how we are hoping to do the convergence of the backlog and put all the information on the Internet so that lawyers can do their searches online. Neither have I spoken about the national geographical survey that is being done at the Ministry of Housing.

This Government is trying to revolutionise the idea of giving people access to title of their property. We will continue on this path to provide the opportunity for large sums of money to be spent on Barbadians who want to own land.

5:40 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

We understand the need at this time and we also understand that in the public domain land is in demand. This Government has a programme which will be outlined during the course of this debate. Sir, I have sat with the National Housing Corporation and we have worked out a programme and we are confident that this programme is doing well. The \$10 million which the Honourable Prime Minister has put at the disposal of the HCF.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Sir, HCF means the Housing Credit Fund.

Asides

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

The Housing Credit Fund was set up by this administration with US\$10 million, seed money from USAID. That fund was set up by the Honourable Prime Minister who centralised and set up by the Minister of Finance at the time. Today that fund has on lend, starting with the seed money of US\$10 million and \$131 million for mortgages to persons in the low income bracket.

Asides

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

The scale goes up to \$45 000. per year.

This fund has on-lend because it acts as a secondary mortgage market. It on-lends to the credit unions,

CLICO, BMFC and any banking institution which might be short of funds for low income housing. Sir, the \$10 million that the Honourable Prime Minister has earmarked for housing, for low income earners will go a long way but we would need a further \$25 million based on the demand.

The Government is now looking at other instruments to work with other banking institutions to obtain funds for housing. The \$10 million is good but we need another \$25 million because people are out there demanding land. We are working with the National Housing Corporation to provide land for people and we envisage this year more than 2000 housing solutions will be provided across Barbados. We will also look at relocations, which we are doing, and we are doing much more.

I am happy to say that the General Workers Loan Fund is now solvent again and I am happy that we are going to get an injection as well.

Sir, we will be spending \$4 million in changing all the asbestos roofs on all the housing units in all the housing areas in this financial year. We have earmarked \$4.7 million to changes and we have earmarked a further \$11 million to help upgrade some of those houses that were built in the 1950's. We have a wide programme and we are happy to offer this programme.

I thank you.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this Bill which is now before this Honourable Chamber. The Honourable Member for St. George North waxed very warm and I thought that he was quite impressive, Sir, but I did not hear him say if he had a housing development for St. Michael South Central. I would have to check with him after this Sitting.

Asides.

Mr. D.T. GILL:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these Estimates reflect a very good understanding of the economy and excellent management skills. It is against that backdrop, Sir, that I think we have to give full praise to the Honourable Minister of Finance. I think this makes the seventh consecutive Estimates debate that I would have gone through in this building, here and in the Other Place. I am here for there and four at the Other Place. Sir, from the very first exercise I was a little concerned as to why you had to do the Estimates and then come back and do the Budget and that a greater emphasis seemed to have been placed on the Budget than the Estimates. Sir, this exercise certainly charts the course, it is the compass and chart, for the economic development of the country through the fiscal year.

Sir, if I had to affix a title to these Estimates, I would borrow the theme which our political Party used for the last General Conference: 'Continuing the Journey to Excellence'. Sir, I would go a little further and say a bit more 'Continuing the Journey to Excellence and Human Security'.

Sir, this document can be held up at any time, any place and any point in history. It puts a case for the old, it puts a case for the young and it puts a case for the physically and medically fragile. If you look at Page 128, you would see the sort of money being spent. It is said quite often that we are not doing enough for the young and you would just get a very glib statement like that and some of us might tend to

swallow it hook, line and sinker.

Sir, \$45 million is being spent on this Educational Enhancement Programme. When we see the kind of funding which will be going to the National Sports Council, I would not go over that because the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central dealt with it quite admirably, and another \$3 million for facilities for the young people. These are the things which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should occupy himself with rather than coming in her year after year with all sorts of science fiction about how he would collapse two sides of a triangle and come up with one side is totally irrelevant to the exercise. Sir, he comes in here every year talking about intrinsic energy in humans and all sorts of things. Sir, the exercise is to speak to this.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be the person presenting the case for his Party. This is his day-to-day existence, Sir, budgeting and forecasting. Sir, it must be a mentally harrowing exercise for the Honourable Member for St. John when year after year, eight straight years, he has been coming in here and hoping that he could bring some form of conviction, evidence to convict the Honourable Minister of Finance. Sir, we learn at cricket that at slips if you stay down long enough you would catch a ball. I think what the Honourable Member is experiencing now, are fatigue, backache, tendinitis and is longing to say, when will this cup be removed from me, how much longer do I have to go through this pain?

5:50 p.m.

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Continuation of Mr. D. T. GILL:

In the 1990's when contagions of the economic viruses went through Latin America and South East Asia, the Honourable Minister of Finance structured the Estimates and Expenditures according to the circumstances that prevailed.

Sir, it shows that he has, in these Estimates and earlier Estimates, taken into account the prevailing circumstances locally, regionally and internationally. Sir, we heard quite clearly yesterday of the possible, if not real recession or slowing down in the United States of America economy. Sir, although it is a real fact, the Minister of Finance has still been bold enough and has the intestinal fortitude to be able to up capital spending by 19 per cent. It shows that the Prime Minister is not a coward. Sir, even though we had to wrestle and tumble with the rich G7 countries and the OECD countries, this administration still had the time and the money to look after those poor people of Cats Castle, Martindales Road, Brittons Hill, Drax Hall with the good concrete roads. The Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands just gave us a full overview of exactly what is happening.

Sir, at one stage one has to put up and contend with the vicissitudes of international trade. This is what makes the philosophical difference between the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) and the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), the DLP seems only able to handle one thing at a time. If they are dealing with international, they cannot deal with the local and if they are dealing with the local they cannot deal with the international.

Sir, the Honourable Minister of Finance had the rectitude to be able to allocate and to identify funds for the Anglican Church. We must make mention of it because it is in the Estimates we are debating this afternoon. We take those things for granted but the Church has made their schools available for our use. Schools like the one I went to, St. Giles, then there is St. Matthias and any of the Churches that begin with the prefix Saint. The Prime Minister has been able to see it fit to compensate them.

Sir, we come to the funding for the University, again young people. This administration is not about making young students at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic pay for their education. Sir, when I heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy get up and put a case with great fervor, great verse for the workers of BET BARTEL, yes, but where was he in the early 1990's ...

Aside.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Yes, you can put a case for them, but ...

Aside.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Yes, you can put a case for them, but he did not put a case for those poor civil servants, some 3000, who were sent home, who had to pay for their severance ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is giving the impression, Sir, that I sat in this Chamber and allowed someone to do something to some civil servants. It is true that I might be behaving as though I was in here some thirteen years ago, Sir, but I only came in 1994.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Sir, he has been in here for a short while but he has been calling the radio programmes for over a decade when he was preparing the track upon which he ran and he still calls in every day. I have never heard him put a case for the poor and lowly civil servants like how he has put the case for the BET BARTEL and these are people, Sir ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

On point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House again, Sir. The Honourable Member should have consulted with the Honourable Member of St. Philip South who would have told him that I have prepared a document showing Parliament of Barbados the amount of money owed to the civil servants because of the Prices and Incomes Protocol - \$161 000 000. If they had received the same percentage they were getting from 1994 until now, the civil servants of Barbados would be owed over \$161 000 000. I have already produced that document and have made it a Document of this House. I

would like to know what the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central now is saying. If he wants to agree with me that the Government of Barbados should compensate the civil servants, I totally agree with him.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Sir, the fact remains, I have never heard the Honourable Member put a case publicly for those 3000 people that were culled off and banished - boyfriend and girlfriend, husband and wife - never to be thought of again, Sir, but at least these people from BET BARTEL, stand the opportunity of getting a good four weeks for every year. I had a brother who worked with Cable and Wireless and two brothers-in-law who worked with ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

On point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member is giving the impression that BET, out of the kindness of their heart, will be giving the workers one month for every year. The truth is Sir, that BET understands quite well that when they pay that one month in every year they can go to the Fair Trading Commission and get rates to compensate themselves and use that as an expense to get their refund.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Sir, as I was saying, four weeks for every year. It was the poor civil servants, at that point in time, I must remind the general public lest they forget, when the administration of the day saw that the severance for the four weeks was too costly for them to handle, they went and shifted around the legislation, tinkered with it and came back and offered them 2½ per cent.

6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. D. T. GILL:

Aside.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

They had to pay 2½ weeks for every year. Sir, the poor people had to go weeks and months and years without a cent.

The Democratic Labour Party has gone on record as saying that if they had to do it again, they would do it all over, like it or lump it. And you can come and put a case, Sir, for persons. Yes, as I said, we are all in sympathy with them but I was telling you, Sir, that I know they were very well paid and reimbursed.

Sir, notwithstanding the problems of the FTAA and the international trade pressures which face us and

which stand to face us, this administration still sees it fit to set aside money for small vending facilities in Barbados. And yet, Sir, although we have to deal with those problems, we can still allocate money for small enterprises which will affect, the very, as they say, small black man.

This shows, Sir, the commitment of this administration to Barbadians, the rich, the small, the black or the poor but we do not have to herald it and trumpet it day after day. Sir, if I use the words of their former leader, the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow, what they have done over there is to heat up a set of cold pone political issues and issues that are long gone. They are no longer issues, as a matter of fact, they are non issues.

Aside.

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Sir, it was eight years of frugal management and instead of addressing those problems, where the economy has reached or continues to reach all the desirable economic indices and markers, and, Sir, the ability to put before us, a set of Estimates which would not put any pressure on the balance of payments, Sir, what I would like to see the Opposition do, is to come here with an alternative, say, yes, we endorse these Estimates, yes, they are productive or they will bring economic success, progress and sustainability to the country but we have an alternative. Sir, there are taskmasters in the art of back-raising. All they have to do is to know how the economy is performing. They claim to be experts in the tourism sector, the agriculture sector and from that, they can back-raise or up the percentages in growth by a five per cent here or an eight per cent there but at least bring something of substance, something tangible to the people of Barbados.

Sir, as I said in my opening statements, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is by profession an accountant. He knows, Sir, that there is a great similarity between Government accounting, as you bring together the various departments, we call them Heads, and Sir, a private corporate entity, where there are several sections doing various operations. Every department has to bring to account its expenses, its revenue to reconcile, to put the position of the loan portfolio and this is exactly what is happening here.

There is nothing, Sir, hidden or left out, because if you leave it out in year one, you cannot leave it out in year two and if you include it in year two, it has to be reflected in year three. Therefore, Sir, for eight consecutive years, this administration would have had to be doing the right thing for us to be recording a growth every year, year after year, falling within the deficit with respect to your gross domestic product.

Sir, I spoke earlier on, that this document speaks to the medically fragile, the old and the young. Earlier on this afternoon the Honourable Member for St. Joseph spoke about that scourge, the HIV/AIDS problem which faces Barbados and all developing countries this part of the world.

Sir, the monies that are being allocated for the drug therapy of these persons afflicted with the virus, I know it is money well budgeted but I would like to sound a note of warning. To date, most of the persons getting the antiviral, the recta viral therapy are pregnant mothers and the very young. I do not think that the persons supervising that programme have the figures to show the drop-out rate because after birth, the parents stop and there is no real continuation with the new borns.

I am concerned that when this treatment is being offered to adults, particularly, Sir, the triple therapy

and you know what I am talking about, the compatibility, Sir, of the drug therapy. I think we should all listen because we do not know when any one of our relatives will fall victim. This HIV/AIDS knows no colour, no class, no creed or family. It does not discern a politician from a beggar, so you had better listen.

Sir, it is very important that it be seen and people know and get to realise that there could be a great drop out rate and that all the money that we may earmark in here today, if the correct follow-up is not done, and the compatibility studies are not done, and the tolerance not done, Sir, it could very well be monies not as well spent as intentioned. It is a real problem.

About a month ago, one evening two HIV/AIDS patients walked into my office at Tweedside Road and asked me how do they go about getting their medicine.

6:10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Mr. D. T. GILL:

On the same evening, about a month ago, two HIV patients who are not yet 30 years old or probably just into their 30s walked into my office at Tweedside Road and said to me, "Mr. Gill, how do we go about getting our medicine?" My office is opened to all. There is no hope for our young people in that age group who are afflicted with the virus.

Sir, I am pleased to see the kind of money that will be spent at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Year after year we hear of the problems there but those of us who cannot afford to fly overseas and have the medical checks and surgery done must have them done here but if the theatres are not sterile we are wasting our time.

Sir, the Legionnaires' disease, for example, is one which is a serious condition. Sir, the bacterium has great affinity and it colonizes the same air-cooling ducts. Sir, any money spent on retrofitting and any money spent on getting the air-conditioning units going must be monies well spent and should be spoken of. This is not the sort of thing that one should sweep under the carpet by making fun about the HIV/AIDS virus and who will get the money. Sir, that is serious business. That is a population at risk, our young people are at risk.

I am also glad to see that in this coming financial year, I do not know if the Honourable Member for St. Michael East looked it, that there will be a sewerage of the Belle. Sir, it shows the commitment of this administration not only to the south and west coasts and not only for the tourists but for the working-class poor people of this country.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, can you wind up now?

Mr. D. T. GILL:

Yes, Sir, I shall.

Right on our main drinking supply of water is the Belle community. Sir, I think we have been generally lucky that the bacterium, such as e-coli, has not found its way into that water supply. I am also glad to see that part of Waterford, which is contiguous with the same Belle water supply zone will at very soon time be taken out of agriculture but I must give a word of warning that if you take it out of agriculture and you put it into a botanical garden and you continue to fertilize it you are back to square one because the nitrogenous fertilizers are related to the same animal waste, that nitrate will dissolve and will get into our water supply so this is a word of warning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am most obliged. I thank you.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too want to join my colleagues on this side in complimenting the Right Honourable Prime Minister for the very sterling presentation which he made to this Honourable Chamber yesterday. The presentation was outstanding both in terms of content and also the style of delivery.

The facts as discerned from his presentation which are incontrovertible are that all of the sectors of the economy are performing satisfactorily such that we can rest comfortably in seeing the economy of this country continue to remain on the sustainable growth path on which it has been of the last eight years or so.

When one considers that unemployment, which is the major plank on which this Government came into office in 1994, has now been reduced to a record low in the nine per cent range, I think that this Government can feel truly proud. I am really proud to be associated with a party and a Government that has performed the way in which this Party has over the last six years. It really makes one's parliamentary life a lot easier having to perform and speak in a debate on a yearly basis where all is well with things in this country.

I want, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to remind you that the one thing that has always characterized this Government is the fact that in the mist of economic bliss the little things that matter have not been forgotten. I was very pleased to know yesterday that the Right Honourable Prime Minister took time in his presentation to refer to those mingling things that matter in this country.

I heard a certain Honourable Member on the other side some years ago made the very silly point that - I remember him pretty clearly, I think he said these words exactly - the sum total of his contribution to the development of Barbados must never be judged by whether or not he provided a street light or a road for somebody in a particular area but that he was looking at the macroeconomic picture and that he was way above mingling issues like that. He is now in another place. Having made such an idiotic statement it was but fair that he was dismissed by the electorate subsequently but he has now found favour, at least for now, with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and finds himself in another place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to see, on perusal of the Estimates, that despite the economic bliss there has been this year a \$5 million increase in the amount which was granted last year to the Urban Development Commission (UDC) which provides things like street lights, does house repairs, engages in the provision of recreation facilities and the like.

Similarly, with sports playing such an important part in the development of our young people there is an increase of some \$2 million in this year's Estimates to the National Sports Council. So while there has been economic bliss and the prospects are good and all is well, economically, this Government continues to ensure that the little things that matter in this country are not overlooked.

6:20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

I want to refer specifically to the area of housing because a sterling presentation was made this afternoon by the Honourable Minister of Housing and I feel that the Government has to be complimented for its housing policy.

One point that I believe this Government has been soft on making, and I have to plead guilty in the process as well, is the whole point that for eight years between 1986 and 1994 the Democratic Labour Party neglected the housing problems of the country. That is a point that I have to speak to almost on a daily basis and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West can perhaps identify with my concerns because we have constituencies that have at least two large Government housing estates, so I believe we are perhaps more equipped and qualified than most other Honourable Members to speak to the problems of housing.

The point that has to be made, and the electorate must not be made to forget, is that any problems that there are in housing today, and it has to be admitted that there are problems, have to do with the build-up between the years of 1986 and 1994 when the Democratic Labour Party failed to address the issue of housing in Barbados.

I am pleased that the Honourable Member can outline to this Honourable Chamber that some 1000 acres of land have been acquired. We can see work already being done and the plans that he outlined in the area of the provision of housing. I really, therefore, look confidently forward to the easing of the problem in relation to housing very soon because I make bold to say that the major problem in this country is no longer unemployment.

When I see people from my constituency on a weekly basis and I may see 35 to 40 people, the numbers are dwindling now because the problems are getting less and less, but where before a large percentage of the people that you saw in your constituency office were asking you about jobs a larger number are now asking you about Government housing units or Government house spots.

The most serious problem has to do with the housing problem, and I have to explain to them in all honesty that it has to do with the neglect that took place in this country between 1986 and 1994 with the Democratic Labour Party when it provided no housing at all to the people of this country.

I am also pleased in the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. George North that he has assured us, and I heard him make the statement as well at another place fairly recently, that there is now going to be the sale of the Government housing units to tenants. Again, this is a problem that besieges me almost on a daily basis because people come to me at all times wanting to know when their housing units are going to be sold.

From the time I went into politics in this country, which was 1988, there has been a promise made in all the elections by both parties that Government housing units were going to be sold to the tenants, and it became annoying to the occupants of the houses when in fact, repeatedly, the units were not being sold to the tenants. Now, I accept this assurance as binding and final and I am convinced that it will happen because the Honourable Member for St. George North, the Minister of Housing, has shown me a document which has in one column, revenue from the sale of rental units, during the course of the coming financial year, beginning April 1st, 2001. You can only have revenue from the sale of units if in fact units are going to be sold. Having seen that, I feel satisfied and gratified that finally this project is going to be up and running.

The point that I must make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that Government policy is always clear when things do not work the way they are supposed to work it has to do more with the operatives and the technical people who are supposed to get the things done than any problem in relation to government policy. I know that there was a lot of confusion about whether or not government units have to be made into condominiums before they could be sold and all sorts of things. More time seems to have been spent on telling the policy maker, which was Government, the difficulties, than in saying how the difficulties could be surmounted and how the problem could be solved.

Thankfully, all of that now is behind us, based on the statement of the Honourable Member. In the document it is clear that in fact the units will now be sold and therefore, I look forward to that. Also, there is the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the changing of the roofs. I have seen a statement again that the Corporation has changed some 23 000 asbestos roofs to date and during the coming year it is intended that the process is to be completed by changing the remaining 1 692 asbestos roofs at a cost of some \$4 788. Again, this is good news to my ears and good news to the ears of my constituents.

I have to thank the Honourable Minister because I must confess that already every single asbestos roof in the Grazettes Government Housing Estate has been changed to galvanize. In Eden Lodge, work has been progressing but, obviously, the programme has not yet taken off in Eden Lodge but I am really urging the Honourable Member because Eden Lodge is a very large housing estate and we see one being changed here and one being changed there.

One point that I would want to make to the Honourable Member, which I have already told him, is that in changing the roofs, given the intention to convey to the tenants, if there is an issue that there must be a firewall it must be worked on at the time that the roof is being changed. If that is not done, it means that having changed the roof they are going to have to go back again and put in firewalls, separate and

apart from putting in the roofs. That will delay the proceedings and tenants are anxious.

Aside.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

I am not saying that it is happening in Grazettes. I am making a general statement. That is something that ought to be looked at.

Again, I am also glad to hear that the National Housing Corporation has sums included in the Estimates for maintenance because even a casual look at some of the Government housing estates clearly reveals the need for a massive refurbishing programme - some of the housing estates were built many years ago - to the extent that some of them had to be repainted and cleaned up, sometimes at the expense of the tenant himself. I know that some years ago there was a programme in relation to government housing units and I am glad to see that there is a sum included now for the refurbishment because as you go through most of them you can see in fact that they are looking a bit run down and therefore, they need refurbishment.

With respect to the other aspect of maintenance, things like the windows and the doors, I could not stand here and say that work has not gone on in my constituency in the Government housing estates in terms of repairing the housing units. Again, Government policy was clear. Government indicated that a special unit was to be set up for rapid response to deal with the problems of windows and doors and that was clear Government policy.

What seems to be the problem is that sometimes, and again this has nothing to do with Government policy, Minister, Chairman, or even management, there is more a problem with the public relations aspect of doing the job than the actual work itself. You find that sometimes it happens that it is just some simply shoddy follow-up work, simple things that spoil the job. For example, a man may go and peg in a window with some pieces of wood so that the window would hold in place and after he puts in the concrete and so on he leaves the pegs sticking out. It would take four or five months before you could get somebody to come and take out two little pegs from a window. That is a fact. Then they would come sometimes and fix a window and a door would also be bad in the same unit but they would not do the complete job the same time and it takes another five or six months before they come back and change the door, having changed the windows today it takes another five to six months before they come back to work on the door.

Work is definitely being done. As you go through the Government housing estates you will see that a large number of new windows have been put in. In Grazettes, there have been changes to windows and doors in addition to roofs, and at Eden Lodge the same thing and in other constituencies as well, I am sure members can report.

6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometimes a little after care and public relations goes a long way to making the job complete.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to turn to the development of the small business sector at this time. Sir, this falls under my Ministry and I believe that the small business sector has never benefited more than it has from this current administration. I say that without any fear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you want to go back to the beginning, you will recall that shortly after this Government came into power in 1994, one of the first things it did in relation to the small business sector was to establish and fully fund a secretariat for the Small Business Association to the tune of \$175 000 a year.

Sir, I am not going to into detail but I want to explain what has been happening in relation to the small business sector particularly in relation to the initiatives taken by my Ministry. I was told that the highlight of the last year by my Ministry, in terms of the small business sector, has been the operationalisation of the Small Business Development Act which was passed towards the end of 1999. Of course, we had some teething problems but we were able to fully operationalise the Small Business Development Act during the course of the last financial year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Small Business Development Act, as you know, confers significant benefits on qualifying small businesses. Lest we forget, the benefits conferred are both of a fiscal and technical nature. The fiscal benefits to be earned by any business qualifying are the payment of corporation tax at a rate of 25 per cent instead of 40 per cent, the exemption of import duty on plant and equipment imported for use in the business, exemption from withholding tax on dividends and interest earned on investment in an approved small business, exemption from the payment of stamp duty and a reduction of corporation tax on an amount equal to 20 per cent of actual expenditure incurred in respect of technology, market research, et cetera used in the business.

This is an Act that has revolutionised the way in which small businesses can benefit, how the small business sector can be stimulated and its growth and development spurred on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as at the end of February this year some 35 companies have applied for approved status under the Small Business Development Act. Of those 35 companies, 18 have already been approved and the other 17 are at various stages of the approval process. Sir, what is significant is that accountants have already collected over 300 applicant forms from the Ministry and all indications are that we will be seeing a lot more applications in the not too distant future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the major problem has been that a number of businesses who would wish to have the benefits conferred by the Act are not up to date with their National Insurance and income tax payments which is a requirement in the legislation. Therefore, they cannot access benefits. I am aware that many of them are making efforts to clear those arrears so that they can fully benefit but we recognise that in addition to that there is also the issue, given a certain requirement in the legislation, that you must be incorporated to benefit from the legislation, that was deliberately put in because we want to encourage the informal sector to incorporate and start to structure their operations better, become more accountable and, as I have said, better structured.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are aware that there is a cost to incorporation. Therefore, in our Estimates this year we have included a figure of \$85 200 to assist persons who would wish to benefit but who are not incorporated to be able to incorporate and, therefore, get the benefits. The applications made so far have been made by already existing incorporated entities but we want to ensure that those in the informal sector would go on to incorporate and be entitled to the benefits. The formula to be used to determine the level of assistance provided to anyone business is that they will be granted a full non-reimbursable technical assistance grant, not exceeding \$1 700. Actually, it is either 75 per cent of the cost of incorporation or \$1 700 which ever is less. It had to be put that way because the variable in terms of incorporation cost, as you would know, is the lawyer's fee. The scale fee sets out a minimum fee, not the maximum fee and we are operating on the basis that the minimum fee will be charged and, therefore, 75 per cent would be \$1 700.

Sir, if someone were to qualify for the status today and then in two years times cease to qualify as a small business for the purposes of the Act, it is not a case where we will ask back for the money because once it is granted to the individual, it is non-reimbursable to the Government.

Sir, so far ten persons have indicated an interest to have this assistance provided to them and we are getting queries on a daily basis for details in relation to how it is going to work. It is a new piece of legislation and, realistically, we would not have expected things to move much faster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of accessing financing, it is clearly a fact that small businesses the world over have problems accessing finance. In fact, the small business sector throughout the world said that it is the main obstacle to their development. I have made the point over and over in this House that commercial banks over the years have shown total insensitivity to the needs of the small business person, have seen them more to be a risk prone type activity and felt that they would be carrying an undue level of financial risk to lend small businesses money. Even if they lend, they would insist on high interest rates and in some cases, very rigorous collateral requirements. While in recent times they seem to be lessening that rigid approach somewhat, by and large, over the years they have shown a total insensitivity to the needs of the small business sector.

I have never understood why a commercial bank could not set aside every year 0.5 per cent or 1 per cent of net profit to pure risk lending. What is so unreasonable about that? This Government, mindful of that problem existing throughout the years decided that it has to take the initiative to provide financing to the emerging business sector. Therefore, we saw the Rural Development Commission, the Urban Development Commission and Fund Access coming into existence which were voted against by the Members of the Opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the last year, these three agencies provided loans totally \$2.2 million to 426 new enterprises. Those loans accounted for 565 new jobs in the Barbadian economy. Sir, I will break it down further: Fund Access was \$1.8 million, the Urban Development Commission was \$233 000 and the Rural Development Commission, \$150 000.

6:40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

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

If you want to break it down further it is \$1.8 million, the Urban Development Commission was \$233 000 and the Rural Commission was \$150 000.

Sir, what is significant is that the types and range of jobs created in this small and micro enterprise sector represented a diversification of the traditional types of jobs that were going to be created in the economy. Traditionally we had itinerant and wayside vending, agriculture, artisan activities and so on. Those are the things that came to the fore when you spoke about loans. There is now a lot more diversification and sophistication in terms of the employment mix for these loans.

Sir, within the last three years there has been a very noticeable emergence of the new and what I call distinctly non-traditional enterprises. Loans have been made by these three enterprises not only to the itinerant salesman and the wayside vendor but you have desktop publishing, videography, karaoke services, business consulting, computer programme and internet related services. Sir, you then have the personal care services like, nail technicians, massage parlours, health shops, spas and cosmetiques. These are now part of the new mix of micro enterprises taking place in Barbados.

Sir, the whole business environment in Barbados particularly at the micro level is changing drastically. This is because the Government has deliberately taken the decision around 1994/1995 to set up these various enterprises specially to cater to people that the commercial banks in this country were turning their backs on daily. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have no regrets whatsoever. It is unfortunate that I could not say a bit more but I will get other changes.

I thank you.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this particular occasion I will not be trespassing too much under my specific Head but bearing in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is a very much an occasion to consider the Bill before this Honourable House at second reading stage, I would want to make a number of observations which I deem appropriate to be made at this stage prior to a close examination of specific Heads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every Honourable Member who has been a Member of this Honourable House would no doubt over time have heard and would have heard repeatedly how mankind, for existence needs foods, clothes and shelter. This has been something that has been said repeatedly over time as more or less to become trite. As we consider where man is in this world in the year 2001, clearly, because of a number of pressures the earth, we may very well have to revise mankind's needs to include a healthy and genial environment.

It is amazing how over time noted authors, philosophers and thinkers so took the environment for granted to insist that mankind must have food, clothes and shelter. Even after the industrial revolution and the negatives that have started to evolve after the industrial revolution, we on this planet continued to take the environment for granted. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at where the world's environment is, I mean the actual physical ambience, the atmosphere, when we consider where it is

tonight on the 13th March, 2001 we had better stop taking it for granted.

Sir, right now there are two phenomena, the phenomena of the depletion of the ozone layer and the very real prospect of the global warming and the consequences of that. In the context of the problems associated with a weakening ozone, scientists have recognised those particular chemicals known as CFCs, are largely responsible for this problem with the ozone, which as they weaken tend to increase heat. Sir, to some extent separate and apart, not so much apart, is a fact that there is going on at the same time that the ozone is under pressure, a phenomenon known as global warming which thinkers are sure have resulted from the rise of the emissions from fuels into the atmosphere.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, any Barbadian who saw the weather towards the end of the years 1998 and 1999 will tell you that the weather that we got from November to February was not the typical weather that you would have in Barbados at that time. Indeed, elsewhere in the world, there were those countries which would normally have winters that would have reported that the winters were getting warmer. Indeed, in the United Kingdom there were some flash floods which scientists traced to none other than the affects of global warming. Sir, if we continue to ignore global warming or to sweep the environment under the carpet or to take things for granted, we could be in for a rude awakening.

There is no question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if the earth warms at the projected rate, unless remedial action is taken, farmers will not be able to plan how to plant and when to plant. If you get, because of environmental fall out and atmospheric change, a situation where farmers are unable to plan their cultivation, ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the world's food supply would be under threat.

Sir, while talking about food in the context of the fact that Barbados is a small island developing state, if global warming affects the seas, where it bears potential to, then fishing can also be compromised, coral reefs can be damaged and the type of support that coral reefs provides island states like Barbados would be badly undermined.

Sir, not to mention the environmental fall out where global warming can affect the country's biodiversity. I am saying that the worst that can happen, notwithstanding what I have said, is that projections are that if global warming is not checked, some hurricanes and tempests with such veracity as have never been known could threaten to wipe out these countries bearing in mind that as their force increase and the sea level rises in the scenario, then the flat islands could easily be wiped out.

Sir, I am not trying to scare this Honourable House or embark on tactics designed to sensationalise or to produce any melodramatic effect. The fact of the matter is that the world as a whole has been mobilised towards considering the long term effects of global warming.

In the context of Barbados' position the threats and vulnerability of Barbados are real but it is doubtful whether Barbados, even though we would want Barbados not to pollute and not to do anything to the environment that would cause the environment to be destroyed or be polluted, can contribute in any significant way to the totality of global warming even though we know that Barbados can suffer from it. Nevertheless, the Government has to be careful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that we are as careful as possible in the management of our environment.

6:50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

I mentioned in the context of global warming that it is now well established beyond doubt by scientists that the vehicular emission go a long way in contributing to global warming and every country recognizes that. There are two or three major countries in the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which have insisted that they are not prepared to cut their emissions, that their way around the problem would be to plant shrubbery and forest. The planting of forest or anything like that Mr. Deputy Speaker, would take a very long time, a lot of efforts and in any event it is doubtful that that is as desirable a defensive method as the decrease of emission in the atmosphere.

And you may ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is he talking about and what this country proposes to do by way of tackling this problem of emission by way of global warming of the earth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the last 20 to 25 years, the world has been blessed with some emerging technologies which can capture energy from the wind, the waves and certainly the sun. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when systems triggering energy are based on wind, wave or solar power, the energy that is used, whatever usage this energy is put to, never causes the types of problems associated with the emission of fossil fuels and hydrocarbons. Deputy Speaker, aware of this even some five or six years after the energy crisis of 1973, Barbados positioned itself to consider the implementation of a policy for the use of alternate forms of energy in the certain hope that we would not be confronted with the types of problems that we had in 1973 and knowing that these new forms of energy are environmentally friendly, well exploited and affordable. You will, no doubt, recognize Mr. Deputy Speaker from your perusal of the document, at page 81 there is a provision of \$1 298 836 for a renewable energy centre for Barbados for this year. At the outset, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must caution that this is not the total amount that such a centre would cost, this is just money to get the centre going. The primary purpose of this center for renewable energy, Mr Deputy Speaker, is for us in Barbados to capitalize on that expertise that has developed in this country and indeed, in other parts of the world so that we can use that to fuel equipment and machinery using the sun as a source of energy.

The great Professor, Oliver Headley, world renown expert has said that even when the fossil fuel goes, even when the hydrocarbons go, even when the reserves of oil dry up, the sun will always be there. He said this and he said it publicly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, bearing in mind that we need to counteract global warming, bearing in mind that we need to reduce vehicular emissions, the purposes to which this centre would be put would be to explore more areas out of which energy efficiency and cheap technology adaptable for alternate forms of energy can be used.

In addition one of the primary objectives behind this is to do research and development. This gives us in Barbados an opportunity to take a more concerted part in research and development. Why do I stress

this idea of taking a more concerted part in research and development? For more than 50 years we would have heard that there was enlightenment coming from Western parts, but for more than fifty years, notwithstanding that motto that is used by the University of the West Indies, the fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without being unduly harsh, that the University of the West Indies has not, until now, asserted itself as an institution heavily involved in research and development. And in a situation where foreign universities have often been funded by Caribbean States to do research and development for those Caribbean States, the time has clearly come for us in Barbados to work with personnel from the University of the West Indies to push the whole notion of research and development, especially in an era like now where we can use technology for a thousand reasons, especially reasons to do with the achievements of the economy.

We envisage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in a time when this venture for renewable energy gets going, Barbados would be able to share its expertise with its neighbours. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, aware of the fact that there are Caribbean Countries, especially in the Western Caribbean, that have virtually got nowhere with the use of solar technologies, I have already written my counterpart in Jamaica, Mr. Roger Pickersgill, and have advised that we in Barbados, stand ready to assist Jamaica in the area of the spread of solar technology. And I am heartened to say that at least one Barbadian entrepreneur, Mr. James Husbands, the owner of Solar Dynamics, has already installed a plant in Jamaica. What I have advised the Honourable Minister of Energy in Jamaica is that we in Barbados were able to catapult the whole drive to solar forward through two types of incentives - Government had offered incentives to the solar producers and also to the final consumers of solar products. I have told my counterpart that the way it has worked for Barbados, sharing our Barbadian experiences with him, is that we introduced fiscal incentives here at the level of production stage and also at consumption stage and that is what has explained our success in solar energy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in a situation - and this should interest you, Sir, as a man of science yourself - where the waves in the sea are getting stronger and not in relation to global warming, but in a situation where wave energy is now at a raw stage, stronger than ever before, we propose using the expertise of Caribbean persons who know how to convert wave energy to the use of the appropriate technology to see if we could capture a lot of that raw, untapped energy out there in the oceans.

There is no question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, notwithstanding our failure at Lamberts nineteen years ago, that the time has come when the types of technologies available to this world, for wind - cheap, affordable and will work and bearing these things in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are determined over the next 12 months to take the whole notion of the renewable energy centre down the road and using our experience for the first twelve months as we get further assistance at the level of the sharing of information we certainly propose making this an institution which is going to be position at the whole core of Government's energy policy.

7:00 p.m

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, having referred earlier to the University of the West Indies, there is no question that personnel from there - and we are considering using the expertise of Professor Oliver Headley and even university facilities - can get the whole project going.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at some point, yesterday reference was made too, to the whole question of the environment as far as the Marine environment is concerned and Honourable Members would have heard reference to the activities of the Coastal Zone Management Unit.

The Coastal Zone Management Unit has done well in a short space of time. It has done a lot in terms of monitoring sea levels. It has done a lot in terms of testing water quality. It is done a lot in the prevention of marine erosion. It has done a substantial amount of restorative work to protect our coast in an era where, as I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this whole question of sea level rise and the threats to the corals are very real.

Shortly, the Government of Barbados, having made application to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) for \$17 million, is expected to meet representatives of the IADB, who should really have come two weeks ago but who put off the visit for the 29th of this month, for us to negotiate a financing package to further strengthen the resources of the Coastal Zone Management Unit as it moves towards the whole question of adaptation to climate change and moves down the road, towards looking for more technology to deal with the problems of climate change and sea level rise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will tell this Honourable House that in our programme for adapting to climate change, we have benefited from free installation of a special piece of equipment, installed at the Port. It can measure tides, help with the forecasting of certain weather systems and can even be used jointly with the meteorology department to determine the condition of the seas as bad weather approaches.

Considering that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that an amount of \$17 million would not be too much for us to put into the coffers of the Coastal Zone Management Unit, the purposes being to ensure that our corals remaining in good state, to ensure that properties around the coast are not lost because of the ravages that sea level rise and associated bad forms of weather can produce. We intend ensuring that our fishing industry is not lost and that the quality of our sea water does not deteriorate. Therefore, we propose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to intensify every effort that has been so far made in the interest of environmental enhancement. If we come to Head 26, I will elaborate more.

I have spoken, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so far, to the actual ambience, the atmosphere and the overall environment. Let me refer before I close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to our social environment.

My colleagues on this side of the Honourable House, and I sense the two Opposition Members as well, when they look at the threats to Barbados' social environment, must clearly be taking into account, the effect of mood altering drugs on our human resources, including our youth and the effect of HIV/AIDS. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a man of the world, you must know that there is not necessarily a disparity between the use of drugs and the contraction of HIV/AIDS. There are occasions when the two of them travel together simultaneously in the dark of the night because as the mood brought on by drugs changes at the twisting hour, it would be possible for humankind to surrender to the temptations of the flesh.

I am not trivialising it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the two biggest threats to our human resources are

drugs, mood altering chemicals and HIV/AIDS. The learned Attorney-General, for six years has been educating Barbados as to the five stratagems by which he is tackling the problem, whether at the level of prevention of importation, whether at the level of detection, whether at the level of education, rehabilitation or whatever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want Honourable Members to get the chance for the rest of this week to see that there are bright boys, bright girls in this country, bright young men, bright young women in this country whose lives are being badly threatened by the use of narcotic substances and perhaps the most popular substance of them all, King alcohol.

Asides.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

The person on drugs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when he cannot get the marijuana or the crack cocaine or when she cannot get the marijuana or the crack cocaine, will look for a high in the form of liquor and then become a polyadic, a multiple kind of addict. When they have no income, they might steal or break and enter and some might prostitute.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I move to next topic, the next myth is that HIV/AIDS is only the concern of prostitutes or HIV/AIDS is exclusively related to loose living, to promiscuity and to lapsed standards. There is no question, Sir, that there is on record in Barbados, at least four cases of young people, who have contracted HIV/AIDS on their first sexual venture. The very first time and they may not be promiscuous. They feel in love, they trusted their partner and they were exposed to the virus and the virus took their lives.

We have to commend the Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the initiative the Government has taken in putting HIV/AIDS on the front burner and we must do our best, both to educate our people and to agitate out there in the community for changes in attitude, changes in practices and changes in behaviour. Sir, I could not sit down unless I mentioned those two problems to do with the social environment.

I come now finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude my speech on the second reading, to the economic environment. There are various parameters to be considered when one considers the performance of an economy. One can consider, for example, national income, the total earnings of the country and a more learned economist might say that the value of one's goods and services, produced within a given period is measured in money terms and at factor cost. Somebody else might tell you that you could use the income approach, the expenditure approach and other approaches to look at the extent to which the country has gone forward or gone backwards.

There is no question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when the good people of St. James North sent me here in 1991, and allowed me to stay to 1994, that the whole question of growth in the economy was almost unheard of and far from growth, we had been entering recession and suffering the effects thereof.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as one parameter of what has been achieved by this Barbados Labour Party Government, we have witnessed growth over the last period in the amount of 3.7 per cent, meaning that the economy has actually expanded. There was a time in 1994, when we made a solemn determination

to produce growth in this country, which our detractors said would be jobless growth. Do you remember those days?

There used to be a debate in this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that with growth in an economy like this, it will likely be achieved in terms of the expansion of the economy but it will be jobless. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my time on this earth and on this little rock, I never, until last year, ever heard that unemployment had fallen below double digits. I never heard that until this Barbados Labour Party Government has been able to achieve this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as much as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said that the deficit last year as an absolute number was lower than the deficit this year, he did not essay to say, when he looked at the deficit last year, what was the percentage GDP deficit and he certainly did not mention the 2.8 per cent deficit this year.

7:10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2001

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

He spoke of \$317 million last year and over \$400 million this year but that is manageable. There is no question that the Government is able to pay its debts. Barbados is creditworthy. This Government is able to pay its debts unlike the scenario one time, somewhere between 1988 and 1992, when a Government in this country went to borrow a loan and the people said to them: "We do not trust you enough, we will give you this amount but when you come back, you must bring back all at one time." That is a bullet loan. When that Government of that time sought to borrow on the private capital markets they were turned back and ended up before the international lender as a last resort. That is a fact.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that it was the Democratic Labour Party that borrowed the first bullet loan in this country. The facts are that the first bullet loan was borrowed on the Japanese market and it was prior to 1985. A bullet loan is where the lender says to you, we will lend you the money but you have to pay back all one time.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the presence of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, until 5 o'clock was characterized by a type of confused silence but it is now characterized by intellectual inaction of a type that when such inaction allows itself to be accompanied by an opening mound, the Honourable Member carved out some nonsense to take what I was saying completely out of context.

I never said that his administration was the first ever administration that had a bullet loan. This is not so. I never said so. I said that we over here are creditworthy. I attempted to make a comparison and then was rudely interrupted by the Honourable Member who is behaving like a political crustacean.

Asides.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you consider other parameters and if you look at the health of the foreign reserves you would see that our foreign reserves are at such a level as has never been in existence before. We have \$1 billion in foreign reserves which is twice the international accepted standard. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also seen an investment climate where investors are pushing one another out of the line to get to invest in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, I want to refresh your memory, not that you have a bad memory, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but because the busyness and the hectic nature of political life being what it is a lot can transpire between one year and the year after and all that is between can sometime interfere with the memory.

Do you know, at the moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that last year the Democratic Labour Party Opposition was saying that it was the non-trading sectors that were carrying the economy? Last Estimates, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Opposition out there said that the non-trading sectors were carrying the economy. This year, when we review the performance of our national economy in 2000, we saw a revitalization of the productive sector and that point was made by the Honourable Member for South Philip South. We have seen the trading sectors beginning to assert themselves once more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, though the future is always uncertain and though there are international economic occurrences, the effects of which would not be known for some months down the road, I think that this Honourable House can leave here tonight with the bold assurance that this Government had been careful in the management of the economy and it has not been so parsimonious as not to deliver the goods to the various sectors of the Barbadian society.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I conclude, that these Estimates have been informed by the correct approach to the management of the economy. At the same time, considering where we are as a society, and perhaps of all the good things about these Estimates, the one thing that every Barbadian will understand when it comes to laying the foundation for further achievement and further growth, is the fact that we are not neglecting our infrastructure. We are still finding substantial sums of money to invest in infrastructures so as to position this economy to take off and to go on to achieving in all probability, ten years of successive growth.

I am, Mr. Deputy Speaker, mindful of your generosity. I know I have encroached on a period of time beyond the limit which you would normally reserve for me. I apologize to you for such but you must bear in mind that at one point a distraction coming from the north interrupted me and compelled me to sit down so I had then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to go over time. I believe however, that I have satisfied you in presenting the case for my side.

Thank you very much.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the Honourable Member for St. Thomas suspends the House I will like to

make this document a document of the House. It is the Estimates of the National Housing Corporation for the financial year 2001 - 2002.

Asides.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 1000 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

I beg to second that.

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

7:15 p.m.