
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 1999 – 2003

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 14, 2001.

PRESENT

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P., (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. Sir Henry FORDE, K.A., Q.C., M.A., LL.M. (Cantab.)
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.), (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs) (Minister of the Civil Service)
Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs) (Leader of the House)
Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B.(Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)
Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon.)
Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)
Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)
Mr. G. W. PAYNE
Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A.(Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), LEC (Minister of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources)
Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)
Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B., (Minister of Labour,
Sports and Public Sector Reform)
Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands)
Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, (Minister of Public Works and Transport)
Hon. H. F. LASHLEY, (Minister of Social Transformation)
Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B., (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN
Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B.
Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture)
Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS
Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.
Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc., (Parliamentary Secretary, the Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)
Mr. D. T. GILL, B.Sc.
Hon. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and
International Transport)
Hon. A. P. WOOD, J.P., B.Sc., M.Sc., M.Phil., (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)
Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc., (Minister of Industry and International Business)
Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House is now resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to join with Honourable Members on this side in supporting these Estimates on Expenditure for the coming Fiscal Year 2001-2002 as enunciated by the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister.

Sir, it must be noted that the Prime Minister placed particular priority and high emphases on social programmes and social development with which I am extremely and obviously very pleased since I simply believe that economic policy and social policy go hand in hand. While we are on that particular score, Sir, I would like to give a broad-based approach to what we view as poverty alleviation, or what I call poverty eradication.

Sir, the issue of poverty emerged as a major concern of the highest priority, particularly at the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen 1995, where the objective of poverty eradication became the key focus of human development. Sir, at the 48th Session in Resolution

48/183, The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 1996 as the International Year for Poverty Eradication. Caribbean Governments then had already undertaken significant initiatives towards giving these commitments the necessary effect and hence, Sir, Barbados, being a signatory to the Copenhagen Accord of 1995, came back in 1999 and established a Ministry of Social Transformation to deal with all the social problems within the country; and not only that, but to bring those Departments that deal primarily with social issues under one Department.

So, Sir, the popular notion that has been bandied about in Barbados and by some persons, that basically a new Ministry of Social Transformation was created to give Hamilton Lashley a token of respect for coming over on this side is not true when you really examine the facts that this was a broad-based commitment by the Government of Barbados to establish such a department to deal positively with poverty eradication, and against that background we must seriously give the Prime Minister kudos for establishing such a Ministry.

Since the inception of this Ministry, a great deal of verbal horseplay has been played around without truly focusing on what we are trying to achieve in Barbados, and what I term as trying to bring about the necessary social revolution in Barbados.

The Ministry of Social Transformation, Sir, has started a process to devise a social policy prepared for Barbados, which is basically to examine the social and economic implications of poverty. Added to this, Sir, within the Ministry a Technical Committee has been established for the past two years, in fact only a couple of months after the formation of the Ministry, to examine a comprehensive and practical approach to poverty reduction. This Technical Committee, which is part of an Authority-assisted Programme with the Government of Barbados and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), comprises representatives of the same UNDP, the Ministry of Social Transformation, the European Union (EU), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Barbados Workers' Union (BWU), the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Barbados Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (BANGO). This process is further supported by the establishment of a Poverty Eradication Committee which basically ensures that all the poverty eradication processes are provided with the appropriate data and relevant approaches.

Further to this, our strategy will seek to ensure that all sectors engaged in the fight to eradicate poverty will be strengthened to respond appropriately. Therefore a detailed and comprehensive capacity and institutional strengthening programme will be pursued to ensure that all sectors of our governance processes are strengthened.

In addition, Sir, we must tackle this social scourge from all angles: the service providers and the recipients. The Ministry itself is engaged in a continuous self-analysis evaluation and rationalization programme to ensure that we are able to provide the most efficient and effective services, particularly to our clients. Our rationalization programme cannot be effective within a vacuum, therefore it is incumbent upon all of us, Sir, to ensure that the reform of the entire public sector is constant and practical to effect a national approach through an effective network mechanism. Our approach must mitigate an attempt at policy coherence across all Ministries and all sectors.

Last year in these Estimates of Expenditure, the Prime Minister had allocated \$66,000,000 to the Ministry of Social Transformation. This year, Sir, in the ensuing year 2001-2002, we have got an increase to \$74,000,000 and that increase, Sir, is \$8,000,000 more over last year and I am very, very happy for that.

Sir, I would now basically like to look at one of the Departments under the Ministry of Social Transformation, which is, in my view, doing tremendous work, so that I can inform Barbadians exactly what is happening under this Department.

Last year, the Disability Unit received \$1.1 million. This coming Financial Year, we have been allocated \$2.7 million, an increase of \$1.6 million and I am particularly very happy for this because it is this particular sector of our community that we should always be thinking about and devising programmes and strategies to help. Therefore, one of the major initiatives that you will find that becomes commensurate with the allocation that has been given to us would be that of a work-experience programme for persons with disabilities, as well as for their family members, who are seeking employment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, for those persons with disabilities, this programme will give them their very first entry into the world of work. It must be noted that employment opportunity is the main focus of many persons with disabilities. I want to use this occasion to publicly thank all those business firms in Barbados who responded during the months of November and December particularly to the call of the Ministry of Social Transformation to join us at that time in placing some of our disabled persons into the job market and into the world of work and I am very happy to report, Sir, that during that period of time some fifteen persons from within the disabled community were employed and are still employed. In actual fact, this coming financial year we are working towards the projected total of putting more than one hundred persons with disabilities into a job experience programme and I am happy to say that a number of business firms across Barbados have already expressed their interest and willingness to take on persons with disabilities.

Sir, another important initiative that will be coming on stream will be ramps and bathroom adjustments. Many persons with disabilities live virtually in a kind of physical reservation, a kind of prison-type atmosphere. If you traverse Bridgetown at any point in time, Sir, you can count the number of persons that you see with disabilities and I am saying that this Government has allocated sums where we are going to build ramps and put assistive devices in place so that persons with disabilities would be able to live more comfortable lives.

Also we are going to be introducing sheltered workshops for the disabled and with these sheltered workshops, Sir, we will basically provide training and employment for persons who are mentally challenged, Sir, because we must admit there are so many varying types of disabilities that we must remain focussed.

Sir, the benefits of a programme like this are tremendous. In addition it provides employment for these persons and will also allow them to be away from home for at least one day. It also provides them with the opportunity to develop their social skills and, in addition to that, to pursue full time employment. Sir, we see this basically as the beginning of a process of economic and social independence for the mentally challenged in Barbados, and for their families.

Last year we started a process of integrating summer camps where persons with various disabilities could meet in an exchange atmosphere where they could share their own ideas and meet with each other and get into a normal working-camp situation with normal children. In other words, the whole idea is not to isolate them and have those children with disabilities all grouped together, but to have them integrated with normal children so that they can also live normal lives.

Sir, this programme is designed to enhance the abilities of young children with disabilities and will enable parents to recognize early signs of disability and allow them to seek the necessary assistance while also serving to sensitize parents and relatives about their care.

In addition to such programmes the National Disability Unit will this year facilitate a sign language course for all interested persons. So I believe Sir, that it should be compulsory for all persons who have children with these particular disabilities to learn sign language so that they could communicate effectively with their children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to use this occasion to inform this Honourable Chamber that the Green Paper on Disabilities that we introduced into Parliament is now in the process of preparation to come to Cabinet in the form of a White Paper which would itemize Government's

commitment to the programmes that we want to do, possibly for the next five years.

I also want to use this occasion to publicly thank the National Council for the Disabled for the tremendous work that they are doing, along with the President. Also the Barbados Association of Retired Persons (BARP), the Older Persons Committee which is under the Ministry of Social Transformation and I also want to thank all of those other organizations including the Barbados National Association of the Disabled (BARNOD) that is working with persons with disabilities. And I must say too at this time that the National Disabilities Unit will be having a special bus for persons with disabilities so that we can carry them to conferences and picnics. This bus is already here and shortly will be handed over to the directorship at the National Disabilities Unit.

At this time I must also congratulate the Minister of Public Works and Transport whom I have sat down with and asked to look at the possibility of bringing in a specially-adapted bus for those persons with such physical disabilities. The idea was not to have a bus with a sign marked "this bus is for persons with disabilities", but this bus is going to function on the normal routes so that persons with disabilities would not feel isolated or segregated but would be functioning in a normal environment.

Sir, I am looking at the extremes in the society under this Ministry and I want to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for allocating \$14.5 million to the Child Care Board. I also want to say a very special thank you to corporate Barbados in funding what I call the six adolescent homes to be constructed. In fact, construction has begun at Sterling Children's Home.

Sir, when these children get to age eighteen, they should not be legally accommodated by the Child Care Board and hence these children have nowhere to go. What the Ministry of Social Transformation is trying to do is to provide the interim mechanism so that when these children reach the age of eighteen years they will be accommodated in these homes and still be specially supervised so that they can be integrated back into the society.

Sir, I also want to use this occasion to thank the Arawak Cement Company because, as you know, Barbados is a signatory to the Rights of the Child Convention and in the Rights of the Child Convention there are 52 Charters. Costa Rica and Guyana have established special monuments in special geographical locations which serve not only as national monuments, but as places where persons go. These are special monuments. We are looking at a feasibility study for building a special monument at Queen's Park with the 52 Charters for Children inscribed on it so that Barbadians, on a whole, can become familiar with the Rights of the Child Convention.

Sir, in addition, I also want to thank the Rights of the Child Committee, under the Ministry, for the work that they are doing. They are working under tremendous pressures and with limited resources and I am happy to report that this year \$25,000 has been allocated to them to continue their work which would be to hold town hall meetings and to further inform the public about the progress we are making in the Rights of the Child Convention.

Sir, I say that because child abuse continues to be a very serious problem in Barbados. I am going to reveal some statistics to this Honourable Chamber and I will also, if necessary, make this a document of this Honourable Chamber but Sir, the statistics are very worrying to me. If one checks the daily paper this morning one will realize that the Prime Minister of Grenada has expressed his very serious concerns with the problem of child abuse in his country and what he has done is to set up a three-persons committee to look into this problem.

Sir, Barbados has recorded 7,332 cases of child abuse over a period of ten years and I will give you a practical breakdown.

1990 - 1991

385 cases of physical abuse

187 cases of sexual abuse

649 cases of neglect

8 cases of abandonment, totalling 1,229

1991 - 1992

327 cases of physical abuse

152 cases of sexual abuse

501 cases of neglect

11 cases of abandonment, totalling 991.

1992 - 1993

227 cases of physical abuse

125 cases of sexual abuse

553 cases of neglect

2 cases of abandonment, totalling 907.

1993 - 1994

124 cases of sexual abuse

173 cases of physical abuse

304 cases of neglect

10 cases of emotional abuse

4 cases of abandonment, totalling 615.

1994 - 1995

106 cases of sexual abuse

203 cases of physical abuse

480 cases of neglect

24 cases of emotional abuse

6 cases of abandonment, totalling 819.

1999 - 2000

241 cases of physical abuse

264 cases of sexual abuse

491 cases of neglect,

69 cases of emotional abuse

2 cases of abandonment, totalling 1,067.

April to June 2000

54 cases of physical abuse

78 cases of sexual abuse

87 cases of neglect

11 cases of emotional abuse

3 cases of abandonment, totalling 233.

July to September 2000

52 cases of physical abuse

66 cases of sexual abuse

91 cases of neglect

12 cases of emotional abuse,

4 cases of abandonment, totalling 225.

October to December 2000

50 cases of physical abuse

59 cases of sexual abuse

58 cases of neglect

8 cases of emotional abuse, totalling 175.

January to February 2001

19 cases of physical abuse

28 cases of sexual abuse

30 cases of neglect

9 cases of emotional abuse

2 cases of abandonment, totalling 78.

10.25 a.m.

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Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, those figures that I have just given this Honourable Chamber are shocking and staggering. Certainly, we at the Ministry of Social Transformation are treating these statistics very seriously indeed and therefore, you find that we will be working to deal with this situation.

Also, Sir, the cases of child abuse and domestic violence in Barbados are coming to us. Domestic violence in this country is on the rise and it is against this background that the Ministry is taking a new and rationalised approach and shortly will be changing from the Welfare Department to a Department of Family Services so that the Officers at this particular department will be able to deal more with specific cases of counselling, et cetera.

Sir, we will be setting up a Domestic Violence Unit at the Department of Family Services. We have already started ongoing talks with specialised persons of civil

society and we will also be including the Royal Barbados Police Force.

Sir, as I said, we in the Ministry are making evaluations and looking always to rationalise the social services in Barbados so that we can bring a more effective and efficient service to Barbadians. Against that background, Sir, I also want to let you know that the Ministry is looking very shortly to move from its present location.

The reason is that we are faced with a situation at the Ministry of Social Transformation which in my view is not friendly to our elderly persons or our disabled community. Persons with physical disabilities have to labour up over 20 steps and it is somewhat hurtful and terrifying to see how those old people struggle to get up those steps, particularly the persons with disabilities. I hope that none of them will slip and hurt themselves.

Again, I want to offer a public apology to all of those old persons and persons within the disabled community for the inconvenience they have suffered for so long a period. The news is that the Ministry will shortly be moving to a new location at Cheapside.

Sir, I also want to look at the Urban Development Commission. Last year \$12 million were allocated to the Urban Development Commission. This year \$17 million are allocated, an increase of \$5 million. I believe that good infrastructure is very necessary for the movement of persons, goods and services which are integral components certainly of urban and also rural life, but the Minister of Rural Development will speak to that.

The provision and improvement of the physical infrastructure in urban tenancies were neglected for many years. Therefore, Sir, this Government, through the Urban Development Commission, has committed itself to improving this aspect of urban Barbados. Ultimately, these improvements will contribute positively to the sustained development and growth of the social, economic and cultural spheres of all in this country of ours.

The Commission has constructed some 31 roads in urban Barbados since its inception in 1997. Sir, we could talk about those roads from Alleyne's Land, Mahaica Gap, Small Land, and I could go through the list of roads that were constructed by the Urban Development Commission. Suffice it to say that in my view, the Commission is doing a very good job in relation to helping those poor and marginalised persons in the urban corridors of this country.

Sir, also during this period, the Commission constructed the Bonnetts Resource Centre. They have refurbished and enclosed the playing field area and pavilion at Murphy's pasture. They have also done a wonderful job

in Carrington's Village which there is now an ultra-modern resource community facility, with special features indebted in that project for the physically challenged.

Sir, the good thing about it is that that particular facility is renamed after Mr. Aubrey Grant, a stalwart who contributed positively to community development through his being a good basketball coach. Sir, Victor (Gas) Clarke also contributed tremendously to the community of Carrington Village.

Sir, I notice that you said I only have one minute. Maybe the Committee of Parliament will have to look at giving us an hour or two hours in second reading speeches because there are so much we have to talk under the Ministries.

Sir, with the further three minutes that you said that I have...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: One more minute.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, the Prime Minister spoke about the Vauxhall Senior Citizens Village. We are looking to start this senior citizens village project in the new financial year. Certainly, this particular policy will be replicated throughout the entire country.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, before I close, since last week was the International Week of Women, it would be remiss of me not to announce to the public of Barbados that the Ministry will shortly be establishing a National Advisory Council on Gender. The issues of women in the new Bureau of Gender Affairs will not be pushed on the back burner. Rather, we will be dealing with all the issues of gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, gender equity and gender equality to bring a true focus on the issues that affect both men and women. Further, the policies and promises from the Beijing Conference, that some of our Barbadian women attended, will be kept.

Sir, I want finally to wind up by saying that we are in the process of rationalizing and bringing a new focus to the Ministry of Social Transformation. I call on every Barbadian to join us in the Ministry of Social Transformation because the Ministry transcends political boundaries and it involves each and every component of civil society.

Sir, finally before I sit, I want to remind everyone in this Chamber to let no obstacle be greater than the cause. We are all here to fight for one people, one destiny and one purpose.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1994 the emphasis in Barbados was on the creation of employment and I very well remember that the change in Government was based on the slogan that "Job No. 1 is Jobs."

I believe that we should remind the country that between 1994 and 2001, that job has been excellently done by the Barbados Labour Party administration under the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and those persons who have sat with him in the front bench and, even more so, by the people of Barbados.

10.35 a.m.

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Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: It is not usual that a developing country can say that it has had nine years of successful economic growth and that the coming year is forecasted to be another year of economic growth. Regardless of some of the problems, some new and some old, which have surfaced, I think we owe it as a duty to the public of Barbados first to say to them, the workers of Barbados in particular, that they have done an excellent job and to say as well that the Government of Barbados has given an excellent lead and has obviously followed the correct policies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Barbados has done well in the face of very changing global conditions. Although in the past year the global economy expanded by an average of 4.7 per cent it is still my contention that there were, for us in the developing countries, tremendous problems arising out of that global expansion as well as from some of the other defensive measures which other economies have taken.

The United States of America, which has become our biggest trading partner, controls 29 per cent of the world economy. It leads in every sphere, technological, manufacturing, services and cultural penetration. Wherever one looks, one will see it. Therefore, we have to be deeply conscious as we go into the new year of what is happening to that economy and what effect that economy will have on us here in the Caribbean and on the wider world.

Last year as well, Europe grew by some 3.4 per cent. Asia and the developing newly industrialized countries such as Korea and Malaysia had recoveries in those economies but at the same time problems continued to confront the economy of Japan. I look back at this to say that although we have had pretty strong economic growth and are forecasting growth for the future Barbadians have to be realistic in the assessment of what they want in the future from their economy and country. I am making that general statement because I want to answer some of the

attitudinal stances which are taken by the Opposition at this time in relation to what is happening in our own country. However before I do so, let me briefly look at the regional economic development last year.

In all of the economies of the Caribbean, with the exception of Dominica, there was some evidence of growth. Trinidad and Tobago led by a very strong 7.9 per cent and that is understandable because Trinidad and Tobago is basically an oil-based country, although in recent times they have begun to broaden the nature of its economic sectors, particularly in tourism in Tobago and to some extent in services. However, because it is an oil-based country and because of the rise in oil prices last year, Trinidad and Tobago gained from this in terms of revenue earning whereas the rise in oil prices dampened the other economies in the Eastern Caribbean, including our own Barbados.

Trinidad and Tobago was closely followed by Grenada with a six per cent increase, Belize with 4.5 per cent, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Montserrat with roughly four per cent, Barbados with 3.7 per cent and The Bahamas, one of our main competitors in the tourism industry with 3 per cent and Antigua and Barbuda with 3.5 per cent.

Any objective analysis of this would say that Barbados performed creditably but when one listens to the Opposition's criticisms, which they are entitled to make, one gets the distinct impression that Barbados was going backward not forward, that there was no growth in Barbados and, according to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who repeats it Sitting in his seat, that growth is fictitious and not realistic. I would ask the Honourable Member not to believe in his own partisan view but to look at the analysis which was done by recognised economists and by people who rated Barbados and who looked at what is really going on. I do not know how many Honourable Members followed the Standard & Poor's ratings and the other recognised houses who rate these economies for investment or otherwise.

In a recent article called "Debt Issuance", from a journal called "Caribbean Sunshine Borrowers" which is issued by Standard & Poor's - I will make it a paper of the House so that the Honourable Member may have a look at it - it talks about the bond issue. It was looking at Caribbean countries who are issuing bonds on the world market for the first time and doing so successfully. It contrasted the difference between the bonds which Jamaica issued, and Jamaica issued a bond, I believe, to raise \$250 million; the bond issued by Trinidad and Tobago, which was in June and they were raising \$250 million over 20 years, and that followed a \$230 million ten-year transaction in September 1999; and Barbados, which issued \$100

million worth of ten-year bonds, and this is what they had to say of Barbados.

"According to Standard and Poor's Mukherji, GDP per capita in Barbados is \$10,000 a year".

Sir, that is higher than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Trinidad and Tobago.

"It's a completely different economy," this is what they said, "to Jamaica where GDP per capita is \$1,600. It's a success story".

That is what they say Barbados is.

"Barbados has managed to diversify its economy away from traditional exports, such as sugar and tourism. The island is developing its information technology and software industries."

Hence the foresight, accent and emphasis on the EduTech Programme.

"It's becoming a home for banks' back-office operations. Barbados is one step ahead of Jamaica even, when it comes to staple industries such as tourism. A tourist is likely to spend twice as much on holiday in Barbados as in Jamaica, says Mr. Mukherji. Overall, the economy in Barbados has been averaging 3 per cent growth a year for the past eight years. It's not spectacular growth but it's a sign that the country is gradually getting richer."

This is the question they asked.

"Given their successful economies, why are Barbados and Trinidad issuing debts? One reason is to increase and diversify their investor bases. Before its \$100 million ten-year issue in June 2000, Barbados had only tapped the private placement market with issues that had never exceeded \$30 million."

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Hon. SIR HENRY FORDE: "By selling \$100 million of debt, the island was able to offer sufficient liquidity to attract US investors. Barbados was able to attract a broader investor base because of its investment-grade status. Moody's upgraded the country to Baa2 from Ba1 just ahead of its June issue. Trinidad, too, celebrated its elevation to investment grade by S&P with its \$230 million 10-year issue in September 1999."

It goes on to say, Sir:

"No one expects the Caribbean to be among the most regular borrowers in the emerging market universe. Barbados and Trinidad, in particular, are widely expected by bankers to remain infrequent issuers in the international bond markets. ... Much will obviously depend on the new issue environment for emerging market credits in the international fixed-income sector but, as its issue in January demonstrated... the Caribbean as a whole - has a loyal and growing investor base."

Sir, I have cited this because they are not in partisan politics as the Opposition and ourselves are. This is an objective assessment by one of the world's well recognised, economic analysts of the climate for investment and development in the country. It has said quite clearly that this economy is well managed and I believe that the people, as I said, should take some credit for it. I believe as well that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and his Cabinet deserve praise for it, if one is looking at it objectively.

It is reflected on the ground, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because once we would be arguing in here concerning the creation of jobs. Remember, when we became the Government again in 1994, 22.5 per cent of our people, on the most conservative estimates, were out of jobs? This has been reduced to about 9.3 per cent, as low as 7.3 per cent among men and recognised and, I think, even accepted by the Opposition.

Sir, the Opposition's criticism is that we are not passing on any of the benefits to the poor man at the lower economic rung of the ladder. I ask one simple question as a not too bright Barbadian, Sir. My question is as simple as this: What would be the best way that you would pass on an economic benefit to a person, keeping him out of work or providing him with work? It is a very simple question.

The Democratic Labour Party must understand that the brand of politics that says that 22.5 per cent of people out of work is good, is wrong politics. When there are more people in work, more social development and transformation takes place than was taking place in 1994. It is wrong politics for people in public life to create a divisive society by stating and making generalizations and bland statements without a proper analysis of what is going on. When we look at tourism, Sir, we have some serious problems ahead and I am going to deal with it. The Opposition and ourselves agree that we have a problem with oil. It is obvious that an oil price of US\$23 to US\$25 will bear down very seriously on our economy. It bears down not only on the people at the pump and in manufacturing costs, making us less competitive, but it bears down in tourism itself because it results in a rise in the price of fares and, obviously, it means fewer people coming to our shores. That is one of the problems that we have to confront. Even with that problem we of ourselves

have been grappling by trying to produce more of our oil needs and, once again under this Government, one has seen that there has been an increase over the years in the local production of oil and gas.

The other problem that we have had to grapple with is the problem of liberalization through the World Trade Organisation. Once again, Sir, this is an area that should not divide this country. The country should be coming together to deal with the intense competition caused by liberalization. Last year, in particular, we first saw its effect on our brothers and sisters in the Eastern Caribbean in the area of bananas. We have seen its effect in Jamaica, particularly in the manufacturing sector, because of the removal by Jamaica and Barbados of quantitative restrictions, and we continue to have to face globalization, being economies of small size, high production costs and with the fragmented markets of the Caribbean.

That is where the effort again by this Government and the foresight of the Government to move rapidly into a single market for the Caribbean are so important. Therefore we need the support of the country as a whole and we have a duty to educate the country as a whole that if we can move into a position of producing Caribbean-wide we will be able to save some of the jobs to Barbados.

Sir, I have said before that I am not a supporter of globalization in the manner in which it has been pushed on us through the World Trade Organisation and otherwise. It is another repeat of something that I spent my life as a Foreign Minister fighting against, the hard thrust of the multinational companies, monopolising everything and pushing into our country.

We have to be very careful as we go towards globalization. Unfortunately, we got committed to it in 1994 and we are going to have, whether in the OECD Harmful Tax area, whether in relation to intellectual property, to create in Barbados a cadre of civil servants and people and consultants that are able to negotiate in the next round very strongly for us. I believe objectively that the country ought to recognise the kudos that have come to Barbados from the stand taken by the Government of Barbados and particularly the leadership shown in the Commonwealth by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter in this regard.

Sir, I want very briefly to talk again about the idea of the Democratic Labour Party that there is no transformation taking place and no movement of the wealth to people at the lower end. I was surprised at the attack launched by the Honourable Member for St. John against the concept of the social partnership because one of the unique features that have evolved between 1993 and 2000 is that the social partnership which came into being on an ad hoc basis has developed into a unique institution that has helped to

maintain the economic stability of Barbados. It is not perfect because we have no particular regular monitoring position for prices, although prices have remained reasonably stable and inflation reasonably stable. It is not perfect because at times we are still seeing workers not getting the full benefits of employment schemes. It is not perfect...

Aside.

Hon. SIR HENRY FORDE: If the Honourable Member has had his say uninterrupted he can just wait. He will learn a few things.

10.55 a.m.

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Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: It is not perfect because, in my view, we do not always find that the Social Partners take steps after consultation. I believe that the Social Partners are themselves intent on ensuring the improvement in this partnership. I will tell the Honourable Member that the Social Partnership of Barbados is now being copied by international institutions and being used as a model to be used in other countries.

I could not accept the submission from the Honourable Member that the leader of the Social Partners, the Barbados Workers' Union in particular, a union that we had a lot to do with from its inception, would have sat idly by and seen a social partnership that is not passing on to the workers a great proportion of the benefits that flow from economic development.

Sir, one of the reasons why the National Insurance scheme is performing a little better is because more people are employed and are getting better wages. True enough, we do see some severance occurring but nothing at the level of what we saw in that awful period in our history during the years 1991 to 1993 in particular.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this provides me with an opportunity to speak on our National Insurance Scheme because I am the Chairman of the Board, although the responsibility lies with the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter as Minister of Finance. The scheme is now 33 years old and the tenth actuarial review of the scheme will shortly be completed. This year we are being reviewed by an actuary from the United Kingdom and we are looking at the years 1996 to 1999. His first draft report should be in our hands at the end of this month. In addition, we have been reviewed by an actuary appointed by the International Labour Organisation, Mr. Osbourne, a West Indian. We have his preliminary report in our hands but we have asked

him to look at some other areas. Although it is only a draft report I believe that I should make some account to the House and when the report is available it will be sent to the Minister with comments and, hopefully, the Minister will bring the matter to the House. It will also be made available to the Leader of the Opposition. It does not have to drop off the back of any truck. The National Insurance business is the business of every member of this House and of Parliament. It is also the business of the people of Barbados. I have made it clear that the report is there for the public. The media does not have to ask clandestinely because, if they want it, all they have to do is talk to the Director and it will be made available.

Sir, this is the draft report and the International Labour Organisation actuary has reported that there continues to be improvement in the National Insurance funding level. Let me say that because of the increase in employment, the funding levels of the National Insurance Department office have improved so the fund has improved to that extent. He has warned us that this could be short-lived unless major reforms are made to contribution and to our benefit provisions. His review is projecting the returns up to 2060. Other than for assumed annual increases interceding, the long range projection assumes that the present contribution and benefit provisions will be maintained.

Sir, unless we take steps to reform the scheme, contribution income may be insufficient to meet total expenditure by the year 2010. Benefit and administrative expenditure will exceed contribution and investment income for the first time in 2018 if we do not take steps to deal with the scheme. Let me say that our investment income has improved because of the buoyancy in the economy and because of the fact that we have tried to widen our investment instruments in order to get a higher yield so as to take up any deficit that may occur from the contribution that we receive under the Pay-As-You-Earn scheme.

We do not want to allow these problems to continue because, if we do, we will move to a level of contribution rate of about 21.3 per cent to meet the cost of benefits to be paid and that is too high a contribution. It could dampen the economy in other ways but we can have a gradual increase in the contribution rate from the present average of 13.9 per cent so as to avoid having to reach a rate of 21.4 per cent by 2009. If we take the measures we can hold the scheme and correct some of the difficulties.

One of the most worrisome problems for us is that the number of National Insurance Department contributions per pensioner will fall from 3.4 persons in 2000 to 1.8 in 2013 and 1.5 in 2016.

I will explain that to members of the public and the House. At present for every 3.4 people making a contribution to the Scheme, they maintain one pensioner. Sir, as the population ages, what is happening is that people are living longer and the person who becomes a pensioner at sixty-five is no longer dying between sixty-five and seventy but dying between seventy-seven and eighty-four. People are living longer and the work force is becoming smaller as is reflected in our education statistics. Hence, you will see that Government has combined schools.

We need more people working. We cannot wish anybody to die earlier because we want our people to live longer. The fact that our people are living longer is again a sign that we have improved health standards in this country, despite all of the criticism with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and that improvement in health standards has percolated right down to the man at the lower level. This is why I cannot accept the contention of the Opposition that this is an economy that has developed without any social conscience. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that we have done is to place a lot of emphasis not only on the transformation of the economy of Barbados but on transformation of the social fabric of Barbados whilst welding our country into a cohesive unity as one of the most outstanding multi-racial small societies and developing countries in the world.

If there is one legacy that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter will leave, it is that he will genuinely achieve that in his term of office.

I am indebted to you, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to bring this second reading debate to a close. My only regret is that we still do not accord this budgetary exercise the importance that it deserves. This is the kind of exercise that needs at least two weeks of Parliament's time to be able to contribute to the broad aspects of the budgetary policy as is the case in other countries, to take the Estimates head by head and go into them in detail.

Sir, as Prime Minister, I cannot control the House but I would love at some time for us to revise the Standing Orders so that this important exercise can get the time it deserves because there is a willingness on the part of Members of this Parliament to participate in this budget debate and to make constructive contribution.

11.05 a.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I want to thank all Members on both sides who have spoken. Obviously, the purpose of the Opposition is to offer a critique and I respect

that, Sir. I thought that on the Government's side the contributions were particularly outstanding. I would like, Sir, without doing any violence to the quality of the presentations, to salute the contribution of the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, he is easily the most good natured person in public life in Barbados, carrying out a very difficult programme. Sir, the demand for housing and lands in Barbados is enormous, but he does it with good cheer and good humour and he has always made himself available to the media.

I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Sunday afternoon when he went to give the same information for which he got a standing ovation in this Parliament at a Town Hall meeting organised by David Ellis at Queen's College he was not allowed to speak. I am glad that this Parliament has proven to be a more democratic place than Town Hall meetings organised by the press.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order, Sir, I want to say that I went home and I told my wife about the Honourable Member for St. George North's performance and she invited him to lunch at my house.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the manner in which this House has started this debate reflects a very important point. This country still has problems, like any other society, but there is no economic or social crisis, nor are there any economic or social problems that are so unmanageable as to be of a nature to pose itself as a thing that cannot be dealt with. Sir, the mood of this debate speaks to this issue. We have problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we are a society that is not only progressively on the move, but Barbados is increasingly being held up, I think properly so, as a model of what a small developing society can achieve.

I want to bring this debate to a close and say that nowhere in the rest of the Caribbean, and few places in the rest of the developing world, could a Minister of Finance have been in a position to do what I have done in this debate, Sir. To introduce a Budget that gives young people in this country the assurance of continued access up to tertiary education paid for by the state. In no other country in the Caribbean this year has there been a Minister of Finance that can offer to civil society the opportunity of an onslaught against all aspects of things that could destabilize them, for example, offering full therapy to every citizen who is infected with AIDS, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is

no other Caribbean society that has a housing programme that is as progressive, enlightened or as effective as that of Barbados, that involves giving the ordinary low income person not only access to houses and lands, but also subsidised mortgages and subsidised loans.

We have low income persons in Barbados, Sir, who have access to mortgages at 6 per cent when the rest of the society has to borrow at 9 per cent. You have persons in the urban and rural tenancies that can buy land at \$2.50 per square foot in a society where people are quarrelling about the price of land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, which other Caribbean society is offering the ordinary poor citizens' children access to the internet so that at the outset we can avoid creating a new inequality in this country? I feel very strongly where in the past, class and inequality were based upon class and race. In the future inequality could be based upon access to technology. Sir, we are spending two million dollars on making sure that the children of poor people have access to the internet and computer technology. This is being done through EduTech, and will ensure that we do not create a new divisiveness in the Barbados society.

This afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will be going into my constituency, as I promised the House, to look after St. Peter where this is concerned. The Minister can use the two million dollars for the rest of Barbados, Sir. I have mobilised, with the help of other persons, the resources to make sure that in Speightstown the public library has a resource centre where the children of poor people in St. Peter and the north of Barbados can have access to the internet so that you do not have two sets of people in the north, one technologically progressive and one technologically backward.

This evening I will be going down there to make sure that funds are provided, outside of the context of the Estimates and Expenditure, to do this and I have also mobilised funds to do it at Boscobelle, Indian Ground, Diamond Corner and in all other parts of my constituency. I feel strongly that there must not be a new inequality in Barbados based on the fact that middle and upper income children could have access to the internet and computer training and the children of poor people remain technologically illiterate. Sir, there is danger in inequality. We have set in train the programmes to make sure that those inequalities do not become part of our existence.

Sir, there is no other Caribbean country that can speak in terms of addressing the problem of old people by the building of senior citizens villages within which are not only matters pertaining to their shelter but to meet the total needs of our ageing population. Which other society in the Caribbean, Sir, can put within the reach of their citizens the

prospect of every community with a road, community and recreational centre? These things are not promises, Sir. These are at the core of the programme that we presented to the House and we have done so without putting at risk the strong economic fundamentals that have been the basis of the stable growth over the course of the last nine years.

Sir, I have not heard any fundamental objections to the nature of the development strategy on which the Government has embarked. I have heard no challenges to the nature of the management of our macro-economic affairs. There have been no challenges mounted about the growth strategy on which we embarked for our fiscal targets; there have been no objections raised to our interest rate policy; there have been no objections raised to our balance of payment policies; there have been no objections raised to our employment creation policy. We have not been told that our borrowing requirements are too large, nor have we been told that we are seeking to crowd out the domestic private sector from access to domestic credit, Sir. This House has, by implication, endorsed our development strategy and our management methodologies embodied in the Estimates of Expenditure.

I will be using the year, Sir, to implement this programme that cuts across every sphere of social and economic activity in the country. I give the House the assurance that there will be fairness as well. The Honourable Member for St. John knows that of which I speak. Sir, I speak to him as one who is older than him and would have had to sit where he has sat, Sir.

Barbadian people are a pragmatic, good-natured people but if there is one thing that our recent history has informed us about them, it is that the Barbadian person wants Barbados to succeed. When this country gets into problems, the reaction of the Barbadian person is that they would take to the road and hold their demonstrations quietly but at the end of the day, by their every action, they would make sure that this country succeeds.

We are the only ones who had a balance of payment problem of the severity of the 1990s, but no black market formed because no Barbadian was going to do anything to put pressure on the exchange rate, because to do so might cause the country to fail.

I am not going to give gratuitous advice to the Leader of the Opposition. The doom and gloom scenario, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the virulence of the language and the personality approach to politics are things that the Barbadian people want to have as passé that is part of the whole politics. They want to feel that young people who come to public life, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are bringing something not in the nature of the old ad hominem adversarial approach that has destroyed other societies. The Barbados society is not interested in the adversarial,

confrontational approach that has been in vogue in places like Jamaica, Sir. They want a politician to speak to a new dispensation but to do so drawing on what I call the Barbadian pragmatism and their good-natured live-and-let-live attitude.

My criticism of the Leader of the Opposition is that he is not yet in tune with the Barbados psyche. Sir, Barbadian people want this country to succeed and they feel that all of us in public life have a responsibility to try to make it succeed. Statements made by the Leader of the Opposition, I would understand the statements were made in the passion of Opposition politics. He has at some stage given the public the feeling that he too is part of the Barbadian traditional pragmatism, good-natured about public affairs, of live and let live rather than the virulence.

Asides.

11.15 a.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The Leader of the Opposition wants me to say that I entered this deal with Washington in 1993. I said that I will never speak up on this, I have better things to do in that respect and it is not an invitation, so I would not treat it as such. But there are two points - I am not going to respond to the Opposition's statement - but there are two points that he is making that I should respond to.

One relates to the business of the formation of private companies and the definition of responsibility to Parliament. It is not a part of the conventional wisdom that when Government forms companies that function under the Companies Act, rather than under statute, that they are, in some respect, reducing the degree of accountability to Parliament. That is not really true, Sir, and the last person to say so should be the Member for St. John because, as former Minister of Finance, he formed only two enterprises but both were formed as companies operating under the Companies Act. The Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust (BACT) and the Barbados Agricultural Marketing Corporation (BAMC). The fact that it is formed under a private company by Government very often means that it have to follow up a more rigorous series of reporting requirements than some Statutory Boards because the Companies Act of Barbados puts a duty on directors to prepare reports, carry out audits and so on that are stringent and sometimes more detailed than those required of statutory institutions, but in any event...

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am talking about companies owned by the Government. The fact that they do

not have to formally send the reports to the House does not mean that the reports are not prepared or that audits have not been done; and it still does not mean that they are not accountable to the House in the way of the Ministers having to come to the House to justify their policies.

In any event, Sir, the performance of Statutory Boards in relation to fulfilling their responsibilities has historically been so dismal that to say that you have to report to the House means that you are accountable in every respect is to get into a nonsensical argument.

The second thing that the Member for St. John should not do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that he should not really pick up the fire rage of the private sector of Barbados and bring it into the House unequivocally, and I will use my winding up to speak to this issue, because the greatest thing that is needed is the continued development of Barbados society, the most urgent thing that is needed is private sector reform and I will explain why. The Member for St. John should not unequivocally pick up the fire rage and bring it to the House and I feel that he did it inadvertently, so I need to correct the record.

On February 26, Barbados Business Authority carried a very lengthy statement attributed to the Executive Vice-President of the Barbados Tourism and Hotel Association. The core of which was the major concern the industry had about the length of time it was taking for Government to put in place policies and programmes in place that the Government had promised.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very serious thing. The tourism industry is our most important industry and if there are problems affecting the tourism industry and the Government had given promises to make changes, then, yes, we would be guilty of delinquency and mal-administration if we did not act. And in this matter, Sir, if you will recall some eighteen months ago we had imposed bound rates to help protect manufacturing, tourism and agriculture and those bound rates had proven to be factors that led to an increase in the cost to tourism and in my statement to Parliament I promised to reduce the bound rate on a number of items.

On February 26, Barbados Business Authority carried the statement which stated that I had promised to reduce these bound rates and that had not been done and that the hoteliers had gone ahead and set prices including the old bound rates.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a fact that on October 24, 2000 I did announce that a relief would be given to bound rates and certain adjustments would be made to agricultural and industrial products.

It is also true, that on December 7, 2000 an order was made giving effect to the reduction of the bound rates on the very commodities that the tourism industry had asked us to give the reduction on, so that, if in the month February, 2001 the Barbados Hotel Association is still complaining about the bound rates that we had reduced by an order that had appeared in The Official Gazette as far back as December, then Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg the Leader of the Opposition not to pick up people's fire rage, because the licks that the Government got from the Hotel Association were unfair and untrue. We promised in October that we would reduce the bound rates on hams, biscuits, curry, pastas, pastrami and sweet corn. We promised that in October and by December 7 the order had been made and published in The Official Gazette and yet in February, 2000 we are being lambasted for not doing what we said we were going to do as a matter of urgent policy to help the tourism industry. We had also said that there was going to be a system of quotas on certain imports and that has also been done.

And I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Barbados has to go through a programme of repositioning between now and the year 2005. There would have been times in the past when structural adjustments and economic changes might have been required because Government might have been too large and thus needed to reduce the size of the stake. There might have been times in the past when we had to make economic changes because the country was spending too much and it was affecting the Balance of Payment, and our oil prices were out of line. But the largest proportion of the economic change that will arise in the future and will require adjustment on our part are radical changes taking place in regional, hemispheric and global trade arrangements and these, Sir, are more far reaching than any energy crisis of the past. They are more far reaching than any size of the stake in the past because they will have three effects which will require changes by the state and changes as well by the private sector. Let me say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, that trade liberalization means the dismantling of taxes on imports and therefore trade liberalization will have a fiscal effect because it will lose the import duty. And I plead with people within my ear that Barbados is today ... we are speaking about \$150 million in import duties. Trade liberalization with the Americas and Europe means that some day those import duties will have to go. The reason we have a VAT now is that we needed a broad-based consumption tax to be able to effect the loss of the taxes on imports that come through trade liberalization. So trade liberalization, Sir, gives rise to a fiscal effect and also affects the fortune of respective industries.

Everybody now is aware that trade liberalization affects agriculture and manufacturing, but trade liberalization also means that corporate entities within economies such as ours find themselves having to compete

with corporate entities in the rest of the world which may be larger, better equipped, better capitalized and have access to more modern machinery. In the same sense and for the same reason that trade liberalization has meant that we have to reform our tax structure and introduce the VAT, it has meant that the Government had to bring into this Parliament a whole raft of new legislation to our industries that are under threat and to create new opportunities as we are doing.

Trade liberalization also means that the private sector of Barbados must reform and the more they reform - be that in an information age - the private sector of Barbados must know how to use and manage information.

Now, Sir, I know it is easy and very often that people bash the private sector for its own safety, but three years ago the Government of Barbados did something that no other government in the rest of the world has done. We said that trade liberalization is upon us. It would mean that new members would now have to be made aware of all of the new rules of international trade and how it will affect them. It will also mean that new members would have to be aware of the changes the Barbados Government has to introduce to bring those changes into effect and to explain how it will affect the members. We told them to bring a new capacity into the private sector to be able to master the changes coming from trade liberalization. Each dollar that is spent in acquiring capabilities to explain to your members the implications and the effects of new arrangements claims \$1.50 in tax relief and there is still no other country which has sought to prepare its society to accommodate trade liberalization in that way. Sir, up to this day the private sector of Barbados has not acted on that generous concession, so that you have a situation today, Sir, where people in the private sector want to continue to manage production systems without being informed of the rules that are being changed in the rest of the world and without being properly informed of the developments taking place in Latin America and how they will affect them. They are not fully understanding on how it will affect them in the region in relation to our efforts to dismantle barriers to the movement of capital and whatever else, because there is a feeling that if you lobby and lobby hard enough in a society where criticism by the private sector is accepted unequivocally, in so far as Government is always wrong and the private sector is right, there are going to be lobbying actions to give them what they want.

And I want to explain over and over again, Sir, that it is no longer open to the Government of Barbados to use forms of mechanism that are incompatible with our regional and international obligations to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) and elsewhere and to stop asking us to do things that we can no longer do, like reintroducing licenses and quotas because those things are no longer open

to us. We have also told the Private sector to let us help them in trying to find solutions to agricultural problems, hence the Agricultural Credit Trust to help them finance such, let us help them to find industrial solutions to industrial problems and hence the Innovation Fund, as well as the funds in this year's Estimate to help 32 companies become more competitive.

Sir, at Fontabelle, we now have a new headquarters for the small business enterprises to implement a Small Business Development Act, the first time that this is happening in Barbados. We have a tourism fund to help people to lift the quality of tourism on the South Coast through refurbishment. The Gems of Barbados has also transformed the dualism that existed between the West Coast and the South Coast tourism. As I said, we are prepared to help them within the context of the international and regional obligations to become competitive, but do not ask the Government to do what they ought to know the Government cannot do. Sir, the private sector of Barbados has entered the information age and we will succeed in repositioning this economy.

Sir, if in February, 2001 an Executive speaking on behalf of our main sector is not aware of policy changes that have been made since the previous December and if the tourism industry is not aware of the policy changes and continues to charge by this as if the benefits asked of the Government had not been implemented...

Equally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has to be a disposition now that lobbying alone cannot bring about economic repositioning. From the outset of the government itself, we see Public Sector Reform and part of Public Sector Reform is to give opportunities to young people to help them make the public sector more productive. And the point needs to be made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the private sector has not used that incentive to employ bright young internationally trained lawyers, some of the management specialists from the University of the West Indies. But who did the private sector employ? All good people but none of whom excelled as managers in economic matters when they were in the public sector. But where is that disposition on the part of the private sector to give the opportunity to some young bright person coming out of the University of the West Indies who knows about management information systems, who knows information technology, who has a perspective of how industrial systems should be changed?

11.35 a.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I stress the point, Sir, because there is a disposition that once the private sector makes a statement, the statement is truthful and that the

Government is wrong and the private sector is right. I am beginning to hear statements that the investment climate of Barbados could be improved if the Government were to abolish taxes on dividends. That goes out as a serious statement but what lies behind it is that there are some companies where the people in management positions are also largely the shareholders. They take limited salaries but they get their payment in dividends because the tax on dividends is 12.5 per cent whereas the tax on income is 40 per cent.

Then you hear, Sir, that you can improve the investment climate if the Government were to abolish the taxes on dividends. So that there will be executives earning hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, paying no taxes at all while the public servants and other captives of the payroll are helping to meet the cost of sending their children to school, fix the roads and so on.

Sir, today I am not interested in batching the private sector but the Government is serious about carrying out a repositioning of this economy. That repositioning required us to introduce the VAT because, as I said, since we are going to lose taxes on imports, we had to have a broad-based tax on consumption and that was the motive behind the tax. The Democratic Labour Party is the objective that guides us in this government and I would urge all Members to respect the purpose of that tax.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The value added tax. In fact, Sir, there are now studies being put out by the World Bank and the IMF that are now saying that it is possible for small societies to counter the fiscal effects of their liberalisation by following the Barbados approach to tax trade reform. There are small countries that are asking Barbados for technical assistance to be able to address the fiscal effects of tax reform.

Sir, there are many sectoral and real productive transitions that have to be made for us to accommodate the changes that trade liberalisation brings to it: in agriculture, in tourism, in manufacturing, in telecommunications, in electronic commerce, Sir, and the Government has committed itself to putting that framework in place. Also, there must be corporate changes and the private sector must come to understand how to use information properly in an information age and we will fail if that does not become first nature.

The private sector, Sir, must be willing to retool and recapitalise as Trinidad did, to the benefit of its manufacturing sector. It must become eager and willing to use new technology. It must be interested and willing to engage young, bright minds in helping to develop corporate strategies and to devise new products and new processes in

this country. It must be keen about building strategic alliances both within the traditional private sector establishment of Barbados and the non-traditional and it must be keen to build those alliances, not just across the region but globally.

I go to the last point I want to make, Sir, that its focus must be global because, in having to make a repositioning of an economy in four years, there is no real learning curve. There is no prospect now of having a long period to learn the tricks of the trade in Barbados and then go global. It is here and now and that requires, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a new approach but it must begin with the way in which the private sector provides information to its members about honesty, international developments, the law, taxation, and that that whole anti-intellectual approach that has historically dominated the private sector in Barbados must change.

At the same time, Sir, the Government is looking for international trade lawyers, international tax lawyers and bright young people who understand modern technology. The private sector should come to terms with that kind of attitude too. Sir, I am not batching them. I have to use this platform to make a plea for the repositioning of which I speak that is not a theoretical issue.

Last week I was in Paris, Mr. Deputy Speaker, trying to defend our interests against the OECD. I go next week to Chile to defend our interest in relation to being able to borrow from the IDB. We need to be able to borrow from the IDB to finish carrying out the sewerage facilities of Barbados on the West Coast and to do the justice project.

Sir, we have developed an exciting new investment programme in coastal management. The first phase of it was exciting but nobody who understands the dimensions of our sustainable development requirements would treat the fact lightly that new coastal defences systems for Barbados all across the country are at the heart of sustainable development in this society. They are expensive and the IDB is our most important access to the concessional financing to do it. We face the possibility of losing that access, mainly because of the new attitude that countries like ourselves have been too successful too quickly. Sir, it is a task that is engaging the Government and we are serious about it.

I speak in this way, Sir, because the year 2005 is going to come and in the year 2005 there is going to be a new set of relationships that this country has to embrace that we must be prepared for. I use every speech, Sir, to speak to the issue. I have to but I am not satisfied that elements in the private sector are serious about making that transition with us because they feel that by lobbying they will be able to maintain the status quo.

Sir, there is no way that we can go back to a simpler place in time. There is no longer open to us the prospects or opportunities to use old forms of protectionist devices. Barbadians must go forward as robust, innovative, progressive people who are prepared not to be intimidated by change but confident of their abilities to be able to take on any challenge and master it. It is how we have approached the OECD issue, how we have approached the small states issue, how we will approach the IDB issue but we want a similar response from the private sector.

I say at the heart of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am disappointed that three years after having given the private sector an incentive that no other Government in the world has given the private sector, where for every dollar spent to develop the institutional capacity, preparing your members to deal with the effects of trade adjustments and to develop the knowledge base and the technological base required, not a penny of allowances have been claimed to build that capacity. It disappoints me greatly because it illustrates that they are not prepared for the repositioning. I say this, Sir, more with sadness than anger. Sadness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because so much can be accomplished if a new approach is brought to bear.

Sir, the Leader of the Opposition was not well advised to come to the House to pick up the remarks of Ms. Springer in February about the Government not having honoured the bound rates when, indeed, we did that in December. These things are bad and I want to say that I started this debate by thanking public officials. I want to place on record, Sir, that people are complaining about Public Sector Reform and how slowly it is going.

11.45 a.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: The first thing about public sector reform is that you have to build a meritocracy and to build a meritocracy you must have performance appraisal systems. We have started public sector reform by doing the right thing, by developing new performance appraisal systems. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is a large number of very able and competent public officers who are working very, very hard to help carry this country forward. There are some areas in the environmental and coastal management where we have public officials who are regarded as world experts, who are working for us not because of what we can afford to pay them but because they have a genuine interest in helping this country to succeed.

There is too much bashing of the public sector and public officers by people who should know better. I will use the Town and Country Planning Department as a case in point. The Chief Town Planner, I believe, is an

outstanding public officer and he and his division have contributed seriously to making possible the boom that is taking place in Barbados. When the Town and Country Planning Department was established, it was handling about 400 applications per year. But in the years between 1997 and 1999, in three years, they have processed 13 071 applications. One of the reasons why there was a construction boom is because of their approach.

There are many people who would wish to have Barbados follow a process of governance to which I will never subscribe. That is the notion of the one-stop shop. That is, that you come today with an application and, without any serious questions being asked or answered, you are given a stamp of approval and you are gone because you are an investor; but that has run a lot of countries that practise it into serious problems. We believe in 'know your customer' principles and that checks must be carried out to make sure that you are dealing with reputable people.

I will also make the point that, where we are concerned, the protection of our environment is one of the most compelling matters that requires us very often to slow down the process to make sure that we are doing the right things.

If you were to ever get the chance, Sir, to be responsible for the affairs of a small country, there is almost the feeling every time you do something that you are closing a door for the rest of history. Therefore, you have to be very conscious in closing that door that you have done the right thing forever.

The Town and Country Planning Department has been greatly maligned because it is not giving people automatic outlined planning permission, but is telling them to go and do an Environmental Assessment Study because every time we affect the marine environment we are closing the door forever and we want to be sure that in closing that door we have not done any violence to the future of the Barbadian society.

It is things like these, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are causing people to malign public officers. I want to end this debate as I have begun by saying that what has been brought to this House by way of a budget and a social and economic programme has been the effort of a lot of very good people in the public service of Barbados who worked very often beyond the call of duty.

I want to place on record my gratitude to the officers of the Ministry of Finance and the Budget Section who had to work very hard under difficult circumstances to bring this Estimates here. I want to thank the officers in the various ministries who had to endure my caustic tongue during the Estimates debate but I do it with good cheer, Sir.

I have to thank all my Ministers for participating in the process and making budgeting not just a Ministry of Finance exercise but a total Government exercise. I really want to thank the House in general for having made this opening of the Estimates debate a rewarding exercise and it is in that context that I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee of Supply.

HEAD 25

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, it gives me the greatest pleasure to present to this Honourable House the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's programme during this debate on the Estimates. Mr. Chairman, this is the first opportunity for me to do such. On two previous occasions, the discussions on the other Heads were so exhaustive that I did not get an opportunity to present the Ministry's programme.

Mr. Chairman, I would want to use this occasion to signal to all and sundry, but in particular to my friend the Honourable Member for St. John, that Barbados does have an agricultural policy. Therefore, I would crave his indulgence to listen very carefully for the rest of today and tomorrow, if my presentation continues into tomorrow, because he needs to leave here fully understanding what is the focus of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin by giving this Honourable Chamber an indication of the type of environment within which the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has to function. There are a number of developments occurring within the regional and international economies which will undoubtedly impact on our domestic agricultural sector. The pace of economic liberalization and the resulting new competitive environment will undoubtedly have serious implications for

the agricultural sector and, indeed, the other sectors of the Barbados economy.

11.55 a.m.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: Among the key developments occurring in the regional and international economic environment are the following:

Barbados became a member of the WTO on 21st January, 1995. As a signatory to the WTO, Barbados is under obligation to act in conformity with the rules of the multi-lateral clearing system. On 1st April, 2000, Mr. Chairman, Government moved to remove the restrictive licensing regime and replaced it with a tariff only system. In keeping with Barbados' schedule of commitments to the WTO, bound rates and duty will apply to selected agricultural commodities which are deemed as sensitive and in need of some sort of protection. Disciplines have also been introduced into the multi-lateral clearing system with respect to domestic support and export subsidies.

Mr. Chairman, the agreement on agriculture, which has been holding pretty much central focus in WTO talks, speaks to certain key issues, amongst which are market access, domestic support and export subsidies.

Mr. Chairman, these disciplines which I have just mentioned naturally have been of greater significance to developing countries since countries like the U.S. and the members of the European Union, where agriculture continues to be heavily subsidized, will be more concerned about this issue of domestic support and export subsidies.

At the hemispheric level, negotiations are ongoing towards the establishment of a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005. This process will undoubtedly result in a reduction in tariffs and non-tariff barriers to those countries within the hemisphere with which we do business.

Changes are also being made to the ACP-EU Lomé IV Arrangement. This agreement is particularly instructive from two perspectives. The ACP-EU trade instruments will have to be consistent with the WTO rules and this obviously will have implications for the protocols through which we are able to obtain preferential access to their markets for commodities like bananas, sugar and rum.

Sir, another element in this regard is that reciprocity has been built into the partnership agreement which means that goods originating in the European Union will face improved market access conditions when entering into ACP countries. It is also instructive to note at this point that the proposed changes to the common agricultural

policy of the European Union and the enlargement of the European Union to include certain Eastern and Central European countries will impact on exports to that Union and the one that will affect us most would be sugar.

Mr. Chairman, since this preferential arrangement under which we export our sugar is linked to the sugar regime, it follows that any commitments which reduce support for the sugar producers in the Union would impact negatively on the ACP-EU producers. In this regard, it is expected that tariff reductions and export subsidy commitments will have the largest impact on sugar exports to the European Union.

Mr. Chairman, there are developments taking place closer to home. Regarding the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, this is being discussed in the context of allowing a freer movement of goods in the region. Apart from the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, there have been efforts to foster integration with countries in the wider Caribbean. Agreements are in place between the Caribbean and both Colombia and Venezuela and considerable work has been done on the agreement between CARICOM and the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Chairman, I made mention of these key developments to give us some indication of how competitive the environment has become, within which our agricultural sector will have to function. What are the main implications of these developments for Barbados' agricultural sector? One would appreciate that there will be increased opportunities to be exploited by our domestic agricultural sector once proper preparation is made. That is a very important point, Mr. Chairman, which I will develop later on. Increased imports of agricultural commodities and displacement of local production of selected commodities and more competitive domestic and regional markets for agricultural commodities.

Mr. Chairman, these developments should also lead to increased incidences of dumping of products on the local market. Another negative consequence of these developments which we have already seen occurring in Barbados is the introduction of exotic pests and diseases as well as low quality products of questionable wholesomeness.

Mr. Chairman, let me for a couple of moments focus on the performance of the agricultural sector. What I have done so far is just to set the stage to give the Honourable Chamber an idea that the environment within which the agricultural sector will be called upon to complete is one that is very competitive. It is signaling to us that significant changes will have to be made in the way we do business in the agricultural sector if commercial agriculture in this country is to continue to be a viable enterprise and if we

want to increase our level of regional competitiveness and, indeed, international competitiveness.

Performance of the Agricultural Sector - Yesterday in my contribution, I made use of the press release of the Central Bank dated January 2001. I also stated that despite what might come from the other side, and we heard a bit of it not too long ago coming from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy when he mentioned the non-performance of the agricultural sector, last year, 2000, we saw a growth in both the sugar sector and the non-sugar sector.

2.05 p.m.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: Sugar output in 2000 rose by 9.7 per cent to 58 400 tonnes and in the area of non-sugar agriculture the growth is estimated to be 5.5 per cent compared with growth of 4.3 per cent in 1999. There was an increase in production by 2.8 per cent and this contrasts with a decline of 10.2 per cent in the previous year.

Mr. Chairman, in the year 1999 there were also increases in the area of non-sugar agriculture and with the right policies and programmes implemented this year we expect there should be continued growth in the agricultural sector.

Let me turn to the Estimates. The first thing that I would want to mention about the Estimates is that they are circumscribed by certain key elements in developments in the sector. As I said earlier, these elements are all part of the globalization phase that is taking place and the Ministry's programmes and activities are aimed at the repositioning of the sector to equip it with the right tools which will allow it to withstand any pressure that is brought to bear on it from globalization.

Government has determined that the major focus of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development during the ensuing year is the construction of marketing facilities, particularly in rural areas. We will seek to refurbish already existing markets and I will develop this in a couple of minutes.

The Ministry will seek to increase the awareness of WTO regulations pertaining to agriculture by training and educating producers, processors, marketers and agribusinessmen. The Ministry will be redoubling its efforts in the Land for the Landless Programme through the application of lease arrangements for public lands, as well as facilitating the lease of lands from private individuals who would be willing to participate in this Land for the Landless Programme.

Another important area of emphasis for the Ministry during the next year is the restructuring and reorienting of the programme to focus on research, development and extension in order to bring new technology to bear on agricultural practices.

Mr. Chairman, this is very important. The Right Honourable Prime Minister said earlier that the private sector of Barbados needs to be more imaginative, that their activities need to be fuelled by the application of updated technologies, and the Ministry of Agriculture is not left out in that regard.

We will be seeking to complete the legislative framework to prepare the sector for globalization, including legislation relating to safety, sanitary and phytosanitary procedures in plant and animal quarantine which will be effected. There must be continued vigilance to protect Barbados from the vagaries of deleterious pests and diseases such as the pink hibiscus mealy bug, and foot and mouth disease. We must continue our vigilance to ensure that Barbados remains free of this foot and mouth disease.

We will be promoting the Agriculture Development Trust as this is the mechanism that the Ministry will employ to assist those in the sector in retooling and modernising their enterprises in order to become more competitive. Also very important, Mr. Chairman, the Ministry will be putting some emphasis on building inter-sectoral linkages, particularly with tourism, in order to broaden the production base so that more marketing opportunities will be made available to producers.

Finally we will be seeking to re-organise and restructure the extension services section to make the Ministry more responsive to the needs of the community.

Mr. Chairman, let me turn to the special development projects at the Ministry and, as I said earlier, one of the major areas of emphasis will be marketing infrastructure. We will be seeking to modernise the marketing facilities and this will partly be as a response to the increasing demands which are being made on the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for space for vending facilities.

Mr. Chairman, you represent a rural constituency and you understand the importance of providing proper marketing facilities for those vendors in your constituency and you have been very fortunate to have the Aberdeen Jones Centre and Market established right in Gall Hill. Previous to the establishment of that market, a number of vendors could have been seen lining the streets coming from Oistins right up to Newton, selling some sort of agricultural commodity or even engaging in the sale of crafts.

We want to extend those types of facilities to other areas in the rural constituencies but also, very importantly, Bridgetown is a point of convergence and we all know the problems that shoppers have had with vendors locating themselves and their operations at the wrong points.

The work on the market infrastructural development is very elaborate for a Small Projects Unit such as we have at the Ministry of Agriculture and I will give you a list of the projects that we have been undertaking in recent times and those that we intend to bring on stream in the not too distant future.

The Consett Bay Project is completed and very shortly the operations there will commence. When I say market infrastructure, I am talking about both the fish markets and the vegetable markets, and we will all know which would fit into the category of fish markets and which would be vegetable markets.

In respect of the Cheapside Project which had three components to it, one of those being the provision of temporary accommodation for the vendors who are currently in the Cheapside Market.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: This temporary accommodation is being provided at Cheapside and the work is about 95 per cent completed. We expect that by the end of this month that work will be brought to an end. The Chinese are eager to start the rehabilitation work at the Cheapside Market first thing in April.

The detailed design work for the Northern Fisheries project will be undertaken in the next financial year. We will also be focussing on the Fairchild Street Market and during the course of the next financial year the drawings for the renovation of this market will be completed and we expect that work to be done by the end of the second quarter. The expectation is that the actual construction will start towards the end of the financial year. I want to say, Mr. Chairman, that based on the original plan for the sequencing of these capital projects, work on the Fairchild Street Market was to start immediately after the Cheapside Market project but, because of the slower than expected progress on the Cheapside Market project, we had to take a conscious decision to forge ahead with the Fairchild Street Market because the rehabilitation work on the Fairchild Street Market will fit neatly into the wider plans for the redevelopment of the Fairchild Street and Constitution River area.

Mr. Chairman, members on both sides will agree that at this stage of Barbados' social and economic

development, marketing facilities in this country have not kept pace with other aspects of our development. This might be because tremendous attention was paid to other aspects of our development, and that is commendable but my colleagues will agree that the physical state of the marketing facilities in this country could continue to deteriorate. We need to move with despatch to ensure that the attractiveness of these marketing facilities are consistent with what people would expect of Barbados in the year 2001.

If the programme seems elaborate, Mr. Chairman, it is because we, as a responsible Government, have taken a decision to modernise our marketing infrastructure to bring it in line with what is required in modern Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier, there are three components to the Cheapside Market project. We are providing facilities for the craftsmen who currently ply their trade from an area contiguous to the existing Cheapside Market. Detailed drawings are to be completed during the first quarter of next year for that building which will be located at Fontabelle. We expect construction on the facility for the craftsmen to commence towards the middle of the next financial year.

There is a small market at Tent Bay that is nearing completion which is a fishing facility. The Honourable Member for St. James South will be pleased to know that the project planned for Paynes Bay has started in earnest. It is not a big project and we expect it to be completed in the not too distant future.

Mr. Chairman, here in Bridgetown we will be doing some work in the Palmetto Mall in High Street. We have bought a building which we will be refurbishing to provide vending space. This will go some way to alleviating the problems that currently exist for those who are desirous of engaging in vending activity in the central area of Barbados.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes to conclude.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, a number of rural marketing facilities will be established during the next financial year. This aspect of the programme will be given special emphasis. These marketing facilities will be handled by the Rural Development Commission. Mr. Chairman, you know of the potential of the Rural Development Commission to handle this type of work because testimony of it is right in Gall Hill at the Aberdeen Jones Centre.

The Honourable Member for St. George North and his constituents will be benefiting in a tangible way from

the establishment of a rural market research centre at the Glebe in St. George.

Mr. Chairman, we have at this time a large number of persons travelling from different points in this country and converging on Oistins to sell agricultural commodities. The problem is that there are no facilities in place for those vendors to ply their trade. We have a fishing complex in Oistins but there is no provision for vendors to sell vegetables and other agricultural commodities. We will be moving to correct that situation during the course of the next financial year and will be establishing a marketing facility at Oistins.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South has a passion for this particular issue and, because Oistins is a point of convergence in this country, we think that Oistins is missing something of importance by not having rural marketing facilities.

Mr. Chairman, the same thing can be said for Speightstown.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: At this point I will ask you to conclude as you are in Committee and can speak more than once.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, I conclude by saying that rural marketing facilities will be established in Speightstown and in Redman Village in St. Thomas. During the course of the next financial year the planning work for the facilities at Jackson will be undertaken.

Mr. Chairman, you can get a holistic view of what Government intends to do in the area of marketing infrastructure. As I said, this is one of the main areas on which the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will be concentrating next year as we need to modernise the marketing infrastructure in Barbados. We need to make markets places that are pleasing to the eye and the state and conditions of those facilities must be consistent with what is expected and required of Barbados at this stage of our development.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 1.30 p.m.

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

The question that the House be suspended until 1.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. Deputy Speaker suspended the House accordingly.

12.25 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

Mr. Deputy SPEAKER: This House is resumed.

When the suspension was taken, the House was in Committee of Supply, to that it will now revert.

Mr. Deputy SPEAKER left the Chair and Mr. CHAIRMAN took the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is in Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I rise to debate Head 25. I want to say from the outset that we are at a very critical stage in our development and any Government that wants to move forward into the 21st Century must first recognize that agriculture and fisheries must be one of the most important components.

We have been able to see and read later that there are various diseases affecting the agriculture industry throughout the world. We must recognise that we cannot continue to depend on external imports to feed our population. This is why it is rather sad, as I speak to you, that this country is about to close down all the agricultural stations, as far as I understand and I hope that the Ministry will clarify this particular point. I am one who believes that instead of closing down any of the agricultural stations, as happened at Jerusalem...

Hon. Mr. A. P. WOOD: On a point of order. There is no plan to close down all the agricultural stations in this country. Yesterday the Minister of Finance, the Right Honourable Prime Minister, made mention of the fact that the Codrington Agriculture Station was closed because the activity over there is causing problems for the water quality in that area, as a result of the release of the nitrates which result from the herbicides and pesticides which are utilised in the cultivation of crops over there, and there is cause for concern and we are monitoring the water quality in that area. Sir, it is within that context that we have had to cease operation at Codrington Agricultural Station.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy did not gather what the Honourable Prime Minister said in totality. I do not think that he is doing it deliberately but there is no intention to close all of the agricultural stations.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am glad for that clarification. I must remind this Honourable House

that I heard the same thing before Jerusalem was closed. I hope that the excuse given by the Honourable Member for St. Philip South is the correct one and we will not in the next two- or three-year period be hearing that all of them have closed and will now be used as MTW depots, as the one in St. Peter is being used.

Sir, it is important for us to recognize that if we do not use those stations for export purposes, we must recognize that a country must be able to feed itself. Any country that does not recognize the importance of agriculture is a country that is destined for destruction. We cannot tell, Sir, when there are going to be wars, when there are going to be external shortages and we must be in a position to at least produce food to feed the population of Barbados.

When one looks at the rate at which land is being taken out of agriculture, one must stop and really consider what is going to happen to Barbados in the next five to ten years. We understand quite well, Sir, that it is more profitable, as it stands today, for a person owning a plantation to sell that plantation to an outsider rather than keep it under agriculture for personal use. That is why I strongly feel that the Barbados Agriculture Management Company must not only be seen as a company formed to look after agriculture on the basis of the highly indebted estates. I honestly believe that the Barbados Agriculture Management Company must be that type of company to oversee the total agriculture in Barbados.

There are many reasons why any sensible Government would want to see that particular solution being taken up and implemented for the simple reason of economies of scale. It does not make sense for us to continue every year giving money to the Barbados Agriculture Management Company to buy equipment and at the same time trying to give money to the sugar industry to buy equipment too. In truth and in fact, the equipment at the Barbados Agriculture Management Company is enough to be fully utilised to prepare and reap the crops. Sir, what we have at this stage is total wastage of certain resources that can be better spent helping farmers to get higher yields.

Sir, we talk a lot about the number of acres under production. The truth is that the problem in Barbados is not the acreage of land for production. The problem in Barbados is the total yield per acre. That is why I am saying that if we want to go forward, we must be prepared to implement those policies that would allow us to have a higher recovery rate and higher yield rate from our sugar cane. We must also be prepared to recognize that Eastern Caribbean Fertilizer Company, the company that is producing fertilizer in Barbados, is prepared to produce fertilizer to suit the soil conditions.

We cannot continue any longer in this country to allow farmers to believe that once they buy fertilizers and apply those fertilizers that they are doing the right thing. We must be prepared to ensure that wherever Government is prepared to put subsidies, they must be prepared to get the agricultural policy in place to suit the policy that they want to see implemented by the farmers.

It does not make sense for a farmer to plant sugar cane to make sure that the weight content is right and the sugar yield is wrong. That is why I am saying that the fertilizer company must be given the leverage to work with the agriculture industry to make sure that the fertilizers used in the fields are the right ones to suit the soil conditions that they have.

Sir, if you believe that 2-40-18 is good for St. Lucy, it does not necessarily mean that it must be used in St. Peter. It might be 12-12-17, sulphur or ammonia or urea. I am saying that we need to have that technical assistance in the sugar and agriculture industry in order to make sure that we have the highest possible yields in Barbados. Sir, if we do not do that we are going to find that there is going to be a sudden decline in sugar production in Barbados. The question is that it is true that we may not be maximizing the total foreign exchange from the sugar industry but the important thing, Sir, is that we must understand that there is a relationship between the agriculture industry and the tourism industry.

It is a myth to believe, Sir, that if we get rid of the agriculture industry that our tourism industry will continue to grow at the rate that it is currently growing. Once you recognise that there is a relationship between the tourist industry and the agriculture industry, it means that when you get rid of the agriculture industry you might see a sudden decline in the tourist industry. You might see a sudden decline in rum production or you might see a sudden decline in the poultry products that are being produced in Barbados.

We have to understand that we cannot continue to talk about the sugar industry anymore but we must be prepared to talk about the total sugar industry and its impact on the hotel industry and other industries, Sir.

Sir, I am saying that it is very important for us to recognize that we are not discussing the sugar industry anymore. I think that the biggest problem in this country is that every time we get up we tend to believe that the agriculture industry is the sugar industry and that is the biggest error. The sugar industry is a feeder for other aspects of the industry. We cannot look at the losses from sugar industry without recognising that the sugar industry is only a branch of the agriculture industry and that sometimes that branch, even though it is not producing a

profit, can be seen as the most viable branch that creates the profit.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: So we need to see sugar as the indirect source and not the direct source for the profit and that is why, sometimes, it worries me why we in Barbados cannot recognize that we need the right mix in our agriculture industry and we always base the agriculture industry on the sugar industry alone. And I will tell you why. The most respectable thing in Barbados is that the people who should be defending the sugar industry are the head ones who want to see the sugar industry destroyed because they want to sell out our most valuable land to make a fast buck, not realizing that they can make a fast buck today and destroy the country tomorrow. That is why I am saying that we in Barbados need to exploit the cotton industry and other crops.

It is also known that when one looks at the farming practices and the practices of the poultry producers in Barbados it is difficult to understand why in 2001 we would want to import chickens into Barbados when we have the capacity to export chickens and I will go back to something that happened last year, Sir. When the Agricultural Society and the Barbados Egg and Poultry Producers were asking... I do not want to be wrong, but that was in 1999, let me correct that. When they were asking for a price increase I was bold enough to tell them that they were making an error, because at the same time they were asking for the price increase they were also asking the Government to stop the number of eggs from coming into the country. The biggest error that ever occurred in our industry is when that occurred and for the simple reason, Sir.

Rather than expanding the market, because they were already operating above the break-even point, and instead of increasing capacity because they had already incurred their overheads, you had the reverse situation where those guys were going to cut back. Now we have a scenario where selfish people want to exploit Barbadians, not recognizing that in order for Barbadians to buy chickens and chicken products they must have jobs. If we continue to import everything into this country, what will happen to those thousands of workers who are working in those industries? Tell me ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am being told that you have to please the consumer, but if the consumer does not have dollars in his pockets he cannot buy the product. It is okay for people to say you have to please the consumer, that sounds good up front, but when a total analysis of the

problem is done then people will recognize that, in order to please the consumer, he must first have a job and if he does not have a job, then he cannot be a consumer in the same capacity as when he has a job. That is why I am hoping that those people who are advocating lower prices also recognize that there is a cost and the ones who will benefit from that are the ones who can afford to purchase the cheap products. But if they do not have a job, even though the goods are cheap you will not be able to shop and that is the most important point. I have no problem if the consumer gets a good at a lower price, I am all for that, but the truth is that job protection must be the key because you have to have the capacity to spend in order to enjoy cheap or lower prices and that is the biggest error that is being made in Barbados.

The other area is that there are some people in Barbados who feel, because they now find themselves in good jobs, that this does not affect them. People must understand that it is a feeding system and that it comes from the masses to the middle class to the upper class. If you do not recognize that there is a feeding system, those people in the upper class who feel that they can do without people being employed in the poultry industry in Barbados would suddenly recognize that the disposable income available to them now will be shortly cut off when you eliminate the poultry industry from Barbados. That is why it is said that the Barbados Agricultural Society and the Egg and Poultry Producers Association did not listen to good advice because, rather than importing, they should have been encouraging their farmers to export and this is where I blame the Government, because Government has to understand that it must be the engine to propel the industry to go forward and the Government must be prepared to put finances to back those industries that have the capacity to export and to keep employment high in this country.

Sir, it is okay for other countries to talk about low subsidies for the agricultural industry in Barbados while at the same time providing for their own. There are Governments within the Caribbean who believe that they have to follow the dictates of people who are subsidizing industries and at the same time telling them not to subsidize their own. Those Governments who follow that type of advice Mr. Deputy Speaker, are destroying their countries and I am saying that because we are small it does not mean that you have to accept foolishness every time you hear it. Caribbean Governments must understand that their first call is to their own people and not to international organizations because, whenever Caribbean Governments get into trouble, the international organizations are not going to pull them out of the particular problems that they are in. That particular Government still has to depend on the productivity of its people. Therefore, what I am saying is that if we were to recognize the importance of the industries within the Caribbean, and were to understand the

importance of the masses in the mix, then we will not go wrong. But this belief Sir, that once you have the ears of lending agencies, that is the important thing and that the masses who produce the labour are not important, then they will always find themselves in trouble. That is why I have always argued that a country without a good base is a country ready for destruction and that is why I have always argued against the Income and Prices Protocol that has been practised since 1995, because I have always felt that the relationship was not a good relationship and that it lacked fairness. I am happy to see, and I want to congratulate the leader of the Barbados Workers Union for recognizing that what I have been previously saying is quite correct and I know...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I never cursed him, that is a myth cast by you all, that I cursed the leader of the Trade Union Movement. What I was doing was trying to impress on him the importance of his role as a Trade Union leader and his ability and capacity to make sure that he stands up and fights on the behalf of his grouping, the same way the private sector and the Government were fighting on their lieutenants' behalf. That is all I was asking and I am happy and I congratulate him.

Whenever I see justice, I will congratulate justice and I believe that he understands well what is going on in the global market now, because the major problem in Barbados today is that too many people have to see a man cuffing a man to recognize that trouble is on the horizon.

I am saying that this Parliament, in 2001, cannot wait for something to happen. They must have the foresight to look down the road to see what is going to occur and put provisions in place to make sure that it does not impact on the masses, because it is the masses that must be protected. And this belief that you can now come and divide the middle-class from the masses and make the middle-class believe that if you look after them that they should curse the masses; it is foolishness because, let me tell you something, the middle-class in this country must recognize that a lot of them owe their survival to the banks in Bridgetown or to the Credit Unions and that their feeder points come from the masses. Once they recognize that their feeder points come from the masses they will never look down on the masses.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: The middle class should never believe that their feeder point comes from the rich because a good example of that is what is occurring in the

economy as it stands today. That is, the rich are well off but the masses and the middle classes are suffering.

If you had a scenario where in Barbados sugar production was up and all those people who used to work in the fields previously had the opportunity to work and to earn that sugar dollar, you would see the natural flow that used to happen within the communities when sugar was King.

Now, it is the offshore services, tourism and all-inclusive where you hear about the growth but the middle class and the masses cannot feel that growth. I have always warned about this but nobody cared to listen. Sir, Judgment day is here now and that is why I am asking the Minister of Agriculture to recognize...

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: ...the same thing about the Honourable Member for St. George North, too...has been able to remind me that Judgment Day was January 1999. He is telling me that I should look at my Estimates and the document that was laid in the House yesterday to recognise that, in the election year, the Minister of Housing was able to use the Loan Fund at National Housing Corporation to impress the voters.

I am saying, Sir, that in order for us to move forward in agriculture, we must be able to make a decision quickly on whether we are going to have one sugar factory or whether we are going to continue with the three sugar factories. We also must understand that our decision is holding up the progress of the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited. There is a relationship that can be built between the Barbados Agriculture Management Company and the Barbados Light and Power Company where they have a capacity that, if they come together, King Sugar can see some other by-products that might be very profitable to the country.

It is about time that the Minister of Agriculture recognize that we cannot continue to wait on the Honourable Member for St. Philip South or the Honourable Member for St. Peter because that decision is very important in the progress of Barbados. We need to know where we are going.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please continue the debate.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. As I was saying, the decision that has to be made about the sugar industry is very vital to Barbados. That is why I have always been making the point on the particular platform of Barbados. It seems to me that we in Barbados have not recognized the impact of globalization and trade liberalization. The biggest problem that has occurred within Barbados in the last two years is that we have failed to educate our people, the private sector and the Government sector on the impact of globalization and trade liberalization. That is why today, we are still in the mode of trying to come up with a solution to how we are going to deal with globalization and trade liberalization.

I am saying, Sir, and sometimes I must admit that I can forgive the Barbados Labour Party - but I cannot really forgive the private sector of Barbados - for not recognizing that the policies that were to be implemented in the early 1990s, if they had been implemented, Barbados would have been nine years ahead of the tide.

I am telling you that those policies would have seen the manufacturing sector in Barbados far ahead of its competitors and that the agriculture industry would have had to make bold decisions already and we would not now be dealing with globalization and trade liberalization. We would have been nine years ahead of the implementation date.

Sir, what we have today is that the implementation date has passed and we are now trying to develop a plan to deal...

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: ...I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that we have to recognize that we now have to cushion the impact of these two things and we cannot continue to behave as if 2004, when most of the duties, et cetera, will have to be removed and that is the date we are working towards. We cannot use 2004 as an excuse. We have to recognize that we have to put Barbados on the leading edge to continue to dominate in the Caribbean and in the outer world.

Sir, another matter that has always bothered me. How is it that, in a small country like ours, we can ask our milk producers to cut back production? I am serious about this. Our farmers are producing well and you are telling them that, instead of producing goods, they should cut back. What utter foolishness are you talking about? And now with the foot and mouth disease and people in the world want milk, what are you going to do? You have cut back already.

Sir, that is where the agriculture industry and other industries and other tertiary institutions needed to come together with a master plan.

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: They need to come together and realize that in a small country like Barbados, we need to maximize whatever we are doing.

Mr. Chairman, every year the farmers of Barbados have to dump tons of tomatoes, sweet peppers and carrots. That is why it hurts, Sir, to recognize that we should have had an agro-processing plant. I am on record in this Parliament as early as 1994 as saying that what is needed in Barbados is an agro-processing plant, even if we had to import vegetables in the initial stage to keep it running until our farmers developed the capacity to produce the products to keep it running. I would have had no problems with that. I am saying that is why the Barbados Agriculture Management Company was formed, to have the capacity to make sure that the agriculture industry could have been diverse.

2.05 p.m.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: The only place in the world I know that has a product like cotton and continues to treat it the way that it is being treated is Barbados. The Arabs have oil and they use that every day as a weapon and we have cotton but we are misusing it.

Let me tell you all something. Two generations from now our children and great grandchildren are going to be laughing at us. Do you know why? They would be laughing at us because they would have realized that we had a good opportunity to put Barbados on the world map because of our cotton and we did not do so. It bothers me sometimes that people would tell you about sugar and they have no problem with it but as soon as you say cotton it seems as though cotton is a crime and we are not to develop cotton to its fullest capacity.

Mr. Chairman, I heard the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development talking about expansion of markets but I cannot understand how he could be talking about expansion of markets without first recognising that we have to build the base early because the next thing we will be hearing is that the markets would not have anybody to work in them because of some stupid law that we might pass or might have passed in this House.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes to conclude. You can come again as you know.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I want the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to recognize that the fishing industry is very precious. I have already said to him that the fishing stocks around the reefs of Barbados have been exploited and that there is a project in Half Moon Fort, better known as Moon Town, that is now doing some fantastic work but he needs to use his ministry to replenish the reefs of Barbados. I have not heard of any discussion between the Ministry of Fisheries and that establishment as yet but I know that he understands quite well what I speak of and that the necessary negotiations will go on.

Instead of our having to hatch fish in Half Moon Fort and then export them out of Barbados, I think we need to hatch them, bring them to a particular age and release them off the shores of Barbados so that during the hurricane season our fishermen will know that they will still have a continuous season from the flying fish season into what we call the 'hook and line' season or the 'pot fish' season. I think the Honourable Member for St. Philip South fully understands what I speak of because, having come from a rural constituency, I believe that he still understands those rural habits that we would have adopted in our early years.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, I do not propose to rebut the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and I do not propose to be critical but I am going to make this intervention because in many respects many of the matters spoken to by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy could have been expanded.

I found his intervention almost identical to the intervention made by his colleague from St. John when he spoke specifically about the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In other words, I did not see the Honourable Member for St. Lucy as creating any real divide on the question of agriculture in Barbados. I think he understands that, where the sector is at the moment, it literally requires all hands to be on deck without divide.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, towards the end of his contribution, raised the point that Barbados may be under pressure not to subsidize when there are countries in the world who are still subsidizing. I rather apprehend that the Honourable Member is correct. There are countries - and countries in the OECD - which do not use the word 'subsidy' but which offer support, directly, indirectly and in smart ways to their farmers. If the Honourable Member for St. Lucy can get hold of the information he might find that powerful countries within the OECD and countries that are members of the First World may very well be subsidizing to frightening amounts. The total global subsidies, which are called by other names, may very well be, by today's money value, up to \$750 billion. It might

very well be that. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is advised to do the research.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy raised a question toward the end of his contribution which is relevant to something he said at the start of his intervention. He raised the question of the prospect of globalization and trade liberalization toward the end of his contribution but at the start he said that we should grow more food and hinted that we should practise import substitution. He did not use the term 'import substitution' but he said that we ought not to be importing when we should be producing. I wish in his conclusion that he was in favour of import substitution.

Now, the difficulty these days, Mr. Chairman, is that, much as there was a hue and cry and a clamour for the practice of import substitution by Third World countries up until the mid '70s, the hard fact now is that with trade liberalization and globalization it is highly doubtful whether a country can practice the type of regimes for agriculture that would protect local agriculture by traditional means. There is still some protection.

I am sure, Mr. Chairman, that there is protection in the area of phytosanitary measures and we are not any more into an era of general protectionism. With the emergence of globalization, free trade, and with our being in the World Trade Organization, there is now a very real challenge for all agriculturalists not only to get on board but to devise the types of efficiencies to which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy referred in the middle of his speech.

A real difficulty in Barbados, Mr. Chairman, as far as agriculture is concerned is that Barbados does not have a centrally-planned economy. Without looking at the benefits or the disadvantages of such, the hard fact of the situation is that commercial agriculture is a private sector activity. The challenge is, how does an overarching government entity relate to a private sector which for the most part must be self-serving even though spin-off effects are supposed to impact positively on the rest of the country?

The very serious problem, and I believe the Honourable Prime Minister referred to it in his intervention as he closed off this morning, is how, when we need efficiencies and when we need a whole new approach to business generally, including agriculture, those of us who are given this opportunity to serve in here will be able to persuade persons who have done something the same way for 20 years, 50 years, 100 years, or indeed for almost 400 years that they need to change the way they normally do things? That is one of the problems which is confronting the country.

For example, if you interview 60 farmers right now who are, let us say, involved in sugar production, you will come away with the feeling that ten of them may be ready to continue and then you may get the impression from the remainder that they are not going to be able to function unless they get, not just subsidies but, all forms of direct governmental assistance; and if you press them for the efficiencies that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has been suggesting, then some might very well bluntly tell you that they have been doing this the same way over and over again.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy said, bearing in mind where we are, that there is a clear need to increase yields per acre, I believe he meant so generally, to do our best to enhance soil fertility and to preserve the linkage between agriculture and tourism. For years, everybody has been talking about the linkage between agriculture and tourism but the real problem is that that linkage has never been optimized for the reason that a lot of people outside of agriculture and in tourism had never sought to establish the linkage locally but may very well have been ending up subsidizing the economies of foreign countries from which they brought their products.

Where the Honourable Member for St. Lucy could have been more helpful to this Honourable House is where he made a one line statement on the question of land use policy and I was a little disappointed that he did not elaborate on it. He came close to indicating that we have to be careful how we alienate land out of agriculture.

I am helping this Parliament, Mr. Chairman. I am not criticizing my colleague from St. Philip South. I am saying what I am saying because it seems as though we are all agreed that agriculture is supersensitive and is in need of a lot of support.

2.15 p.m.

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Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, without saying it in these words when he suggested that we ought not to alienate land out of agriculture, came close; and he could have helped this Parliament by more explanation to suggest that as far as agriculture is concerned, this new talk about the best economic use of land has to be put into its proper context.

To a land shark or a real estate agent not interested in anything but selling ...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member's impression that I did not fully explain myself is misleading. What I said was that we cannot only look at short term gains, forgetting long

term gains. That is why I went on to make the point that the Agricultural Management Company is the best company to oversee all agricultural land in Barbados. I thought when I made that point that the member would have fully understood.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Honourable Member for his explanation, but let me put it this way. To a person with an attachment or an affection for agriculture, the argument that people all through this world would want to put that you should identify every single parcel of land the way a real estate agent not interested in that activity but in a commission would, is a dangerous thing.

When it comes to the economic use of land then, clearly, these countries - and every country - should try to favour their own agriculture and should be interested in seeing where specific types of land are useless for agriculture. When you get valuable agricultural land, especially when you take into account constraining factors like shortage of that particular type of agricultural land, then we should be very careful not to alienate the land out of agriculture as the Honourable Member said.

In my view, the Honourable Member is quite correct when he lamented the fact that some of us who see ourselves as privileged and who have more or less walked up a ladder - and I speak of some of us collectively, not me, because the Honourable Member would not expect me to be in that sort of rat-race - but some people, once they get up a certain ladder, when they reach the top rung, do not remember the bottom rung. Those very people who from their behaviour, according to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, seem not to care anything for agriculture were often schooled out of the produce of a small plot. Some of their school fees were paid out of a form of farming slightly higher than subsistence farming where their parents were able to make a little money by selling some cattle, some goats, engaging some pigs.

We may very well be reaping the rewards of our own shortsightedness. For about 40 or 50 years persons who have loved this country have been cautioning that if we disregard agriculture as some kind of Cinderella, if we disregard it as being the one sector that is not as promising as other sectors, we would live to regret it.

People have been arguing, as far as you would remember, Mr. Chairman, that if you neglect and disregard agriculture, the time would come when you would regret that attitude. We may have peaked, in terms of our attitude to agriculture, not when labour had no cost but when we were able to mobilise a whole society to value its importance and get the youth involved in it.

I dare say, Mr. Chairman, that, the way things are right now, it is very difficult to persuade young people to see agriculture as a meaningful activity and as being profitable. I think that in the interest of wholesome and healthy debate, Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South would do well to take the issues raised by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy to heart and offer Parliament the types of explanations being sought.

There is no question, as I conclude in this intervention, that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was correct when he said that we are being pressured not to subsidize agriculture when big countries are still subsidizing by different means. I rather think that the time has come when in this era of trade liberalization and globalization that private sector farmers are perhaps challenged, even more than other businessmen in this economy, as was raised by the Right Honourable Prime Minister this morning when he said that he has a fundamental fear that lots of businessmen, outside of farming, in commercial activity in Barbados, are not fully ready to face the challenges of globalization.

I suspect, Mr. Chairman, that that comment would also apply to a lot of farmers who, notwithstanding whatever prejudices they may have suffered over time, may very well be the one segment of the community perhaps more vulnerable than even some that were referred to by the Right Honourable Prime Minister.

The time has clearly come when I believe this Parliament would do well, rather than have to divide on this whole question of agriculture, to reach some sort of common ground or consensus because I am very concerned that, if all hands do not get on deck on this question as uncertain as I said the future was last night when I spoke, the uncertainties and the risks facing agriculturalists will be greater than in any other segment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I want to deal with a number of issues under this particular Head and I hope the Minister might be able to make a note of them, assuming that he thinks they are worthy of response, and perhaps give the people of Barbados the benefit of his views. I think the Honourable Member for St. Lucy raised some important overarching concerns about agriculture and about the impact of globalization which, I agree with the Honourable Member for St. James North, are vital.

There is also a major issue in the context of agriculture in Barbados that the Minister has been extremely reluctant to speak about. Even if he is able to tell us that the Government has done a few things to bolster sugar production in individual cases, to assist with some poultry farming or some land for the landless in selected

areas, the entire agricultural policy in Barbados will come to nought unless the Minister is clear and fights for a strong, well articulated land use policy for Barbados, which does not create a scenario where there is so much speculation for land to be converted into other uses that people would rather sit, allow their land to run to ruin, knowing that they could reap a windfall if the Town Planning Department gives them permission to subdivide it or allows it to be used for other purposes.

I believe that the Minister needs first of all to slap down the Chairman of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust Limited (BACT), particularly in respect of the comment made in his Report about the fact that they are waiting for subdivision of the indebted plantations so that they can recover the debt of the BACT. This is the whole reason why we moved the debt out of the Barbados National Bank (BNB), which could very well have adopted the attitude that he is adopting - if he is a debt collector, which is what it seems he wishes to cast the BACT as - when we could have set up a little debt recovery department in BNB, left the sugar debt there, waited until you had a high level of land speculation as you do now and simply sold off the assets.

The BACT is an integral part of the arrangement for taking out the sugar debt and maintaining a sugar industry in Barbados on the understanding that there is a certain core of land in Barbados which will be available for both sugar and non-sugar agricultural production. If the Government is in control, by way of mortgages, over the sugar lands and of the disposition of those properties, and the Government's principal concern is the recovery of the debt, and the Chairman of the company says that if he can get this land subdivided and the relevant Town Planning permissions that he will be able to pay off the debt,...

2.25 p.m.

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Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: ... it sends a signal to the owners of those plantations that they could as well not bother being involved in sugar production. We have had many examples of what has happened in terms of the value of agricultural land in Barbados.

Every now and then the Prime Minister gets up and raves about Bushy Park Plantation. He makes the point that the Democratic Labour Party agreed to the sale of Bushy Park Plantation at a value which was less than the debt which the plantation owned to the Barbados National Bank. What he refuses to do is compare the value of Bushy Park Plantation to its debt on the current value of land for alternative uses, other than what Bushy Park was being used for which principally was bush, or in relation to tourism uses. The Honourable Member is saying that we

would have allowed the owners to sell a very valuable piece of land but at the time when the decision was taken we had not had the level of land speculation in Barbados which we are having now because land prices had not increased significantly and the owners of that plantation said it was a burden.

I am certain that the owners would do everything possible to get it back under their control. In fact, I am saying that I know that the owners of Bushy Park plantation in this type of market would like to get that plantation back. Not to plant sugar cane but for alternative uses where they can subdivide for tourism and a variety of other uses.

This puts the Minister of Agriculture in a tough position because he is articulating an agricultural policy but everything tells you that even the people who want to be involved in agriculture can see a windfall if their land is put to alternative uses. The Government has the responsibility to send out a very strong message. The Minister, even though he is not the minister responsible for town planning or land use issues, needs to understand that if he cannot state clearly what his view may be of what an appropriate land use policy is for Barbados, to ensure that those who are going to be working with him in agriculture have the confidence that what they are doing is in the national interest or is part of Government's policy, then we will make no headway whatsoever. Once, again I call on the Minister to state clearly what is his perspective on the land use policy for Barbados.

There is an area in St. John which overlooks Bath. I do not want to identify it because the next time I have to clash with the plantation owners I am not even going to bother to go to the town planners or anybody else. I am going to go straight to the Press on it. I am not even going to bother with the Minister because if I do not hear the land use policy today, I will know I am talking to the wind.

Sir, in that area there were a lot of small holders who had agricultural plots of two acres and various other sizes and the new owner of that land believes that there is the potential for the land to be used for housing development. Apes Hill plantation, by the way, was purchased by a Barbadian businessman who I would like to see succeed but I certainly would not like to see Apes Hill plantation cut up into lots. The owner of the land at Bath feels that if that land were taken out of agriculture production and the town planner said it was rab land that he would get permission to subdivide it and use it for housing. He has tried to chase the farmers off the land, refuses to take rent from them and is giving them a 'dusty' time in respect of land that they have occupied for a very long period of time. Sir, you are going to have attitudes like that persisting.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It will not only be in St. John. I am certain that in many other parts of Barbados there are attempts to ensure that the land is rab land and that it cannot be used for agricultural purposes, particularly when it has a panoramic view of the sea or where other people might have expressed an interest in purchasing land in that area. You are going to find that persons who own that land are going to avoid having it in agricultural production.

Mr. Chairman, the second point I want to make relates to the question of vendors because I have noticed that the Government has staked a lot on the completion of new facilities for vendors and if they are completed you can compliment them for that because it was an area that definitely needed some attention.

At the same time, I want to be assured by the Minister that, commensurate with these new facilities, opportunities will be provided for other Barbadians to be granted licences as vendors because it seems to me that there is a very capricious manner in which licences are granted or not granted, as the case may be, to persons who apply for them in respect of selling either agricultural produce, fruits or other items that may be sold by vendors in the markets in Barbados.

I am not interested in the facilities per se at this stage because I believe that any sensible Government will seek to upgrade all of the existing vending facilities but the Minister needs to say if there is going to be an expansion in the number of licences granted. He also needs to give us an idea of the policy with respect to the use of the new facilities. Where old licences have expired and persons have died, what is the policy that the Minister is going to be pursuing in that regard?

The third issue, Mr. Chairman, relates to the Consett Bay Fish Market. In the event that he did not speak to the issue in his opening remarks, I would like to find out what is the progress. I have visited the area but I have not had the benefit of a site visit. I would like to know if the Ministry of Agriculture might be amenable to doing some additional low-cost work on the fish shed in Martins Bay in St. John. I know that some work has been done but there is some additional work that the Minister can take a look at and see whether he might be able to incorporate it within this year's budget to improve that particular area. There are still a couple of fishermen who use the Martins Bay Fish shed. Apart from that, it is used as a community meeting point and in terms of a community meeting point, the shed is still important.

There is another area in relation to agriculture which is very important. I have noticed that Government has stated in its explanatory notes in this year's Estimates that it is going to be assisting with irrigation facilities for the

land for the landless project. I live in an area which has irrigation facilities and at this time of year they have found a way to phase it but, even with that phasing, if you are involved in a kitchen garden it would be extremely difficult for you to function because the water pressure is not adequate.

I want to know whether the Minister can indicate to me whether, in respect of the existing irrigation system, the Ministry is able to offer irrigation services year round and whether, in terms of both the land for the landless project and the existing irrigation programmes that are in place, he anticipates that there will be any expansion of the facilities.

Another area of concern I have relates to Bath in St. John. I have noticed that the Soil Conservation, in collaboration with MTW, is doing some stabilization work in the Bath and Glenburnie areas, as well as some other infrastructure work.

There has been a lot said about tourism development at Bath. I am not opposed to certain areas being used for tourism development but what concerns me is that the Government may undertake major work in this area of the Scotland district only to find that a lot of that work is inconsistent with the kind of physical development that may take place in respect of tourism.

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Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Let us assume that you are going to put a golf course in that area, because there has been talk about that, or you want to put in some other kind of major facility which covers a large land area. Does it really make any sense for Government to undertake more than remedial work in this area without coming to a decision as to how the land is going to be used? In other words, it is going to cost us \$40 million to put in infrastructure just for a private sector to come and say that I do not want that here or there or I want the road moved and so on. It may mean that the tax payers at the end of the day have put out significant sums of money and that money may be wasted in the context of what is planned for the area.

Sir, the final point which relates to the Rural Development Commission. The Minister told me a couple of weeks ago, and I assumed that he was not speaking off the record or confidentially, that he has information for me on projects to be undertaken in the constituency of St. John, during this fiscal year, which would include significant number of street lights to be installed; a revolution in terms of road construction and tenancies in St. John, and other major infrastructure.

One good thing that I would say is that I hope that it does not put him in any trouble. The new Director of the Rural Development Commission and his staff have been very proactive in making contact with me, which was a far cry better than the approach adopted by the previous Director of the Rural Development Commission whom I found him extremely rude and often offensive in the manner in which he conducted his duties - but that is water under the bridge. I compliment the new Director for making contact and, at least in respect of two matters, for dealing effectively with them but I would still like to know what other plans are in place for the constituency of St. John and I hope that the Minister might be able to respond during the next few minutes. If he does, it would mean that I would not have to speak again. I will leave this Head for which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is the substantive Shadow Minister to cover all the ground from there.

I thank you.

Hon. Mr. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, first, let me thank the Honourable Members of both sides of the Honourable House for their contributions. The points that were made are well taken and I will seek to respond to them, if not at this stage because I have a particular course, but I will seek to respond to them during the course of this debate.

Mr. Chairman, let me get back to the previous area I had started and this relates to the provision of the marketing infrastructure. At that time I had reached the point where I made mention of the fact that one aspect of the Ministry's programme in this regard relates to the rural marketing facilities. I said that facilities will be established at Oistins; the Glebe, St. George; Redmans Village, St. Thomas and Speightstown.

Mr. Chairman, as the Honourable Member for St. John has said, a responsible Government would seek to refurbish and upgrade all the marketing facilities and, as a way of decentralising distribution in marketing systems in this country, to establish facilities in the rural districts. We are not talking about very expensive and elaborate structures. We are talking about nice attractive structures in the rural constituencies that would send off a bit of a magnetic force which would cause the consuming public to want to enter that area in order to do some trading.

Mr. Chairman, there is another important point here which was sort of mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. John when he made a request for an increase in the number of licences for vendors. We all recognized that there has been a significant increase in the demand for vending space in Barbados. It is incumbent on the Ministry of Agriculture to respond to that demand. After all, we want not only to increase agricultural production but to

increase the productivity of those operations and, having satisfied ourselves in that regard, we need to provide the opportunities for the distribution in marketing of these agricultural commodities. It is within this context that we are taking serious looks at the situation. I forgot to mention earlier the work done at the Eagle Hall junction and, in the very near future, the rehabilitation work of the Eagle Hall Market will be brought to completion.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it is not all about the provision of new facilities. During the next fiscal year we will be seeking to upgrade all the existing markets. In the year 2001 to 2002 we should be repairing the small vending stalls at the small market at Six Cross Roads; repairs to the vending stalls at Oistins; we will be providing new septic tanks and improving the processing hall at the Weston fish market; improving the main building and vending stalls at the Bridgetown public market; replacing a cool condenser at the Bridgetown public market and repositioning vendor stalls at Miami Mall Market.

Mr. Chairman, we need to ensure that the operations at these markets proceed in a very professional manner. We at the Ministry will be putting some emphasis on the training of the workers at the various markets. We want to provide a complete package which, at the end of the day, will make a market a place where Barbadians and visitors alike can feel very comfortable in going to.

Let me turn my attention to the work that is undertaken by the Planning Unit. The Planning Unit, which is staffed by a small number of economists, will be undertaking some very serious work to help in our drive to reposition the Ministry of Agriculture in an age of increasing regional and international competition. During the fiscal year the Planning Unit will embark on an island-wide collection of statistical data with respect to crops and livestock. This exercise will ensure that accurate and up-to-date information is available to aid the decision making process.

A major process to be undertaken is an agricultural census. A census is undertaken every 10 years and the last one was done in 1989. Mr. Chairman, preparatory work on this census started during the last fiscal year. The major activities to be undertaken during the next year will be a consultancy to assist with the planning and preparation; initial training for the enumerators; the preparation of training manuals and questionnaires; meeting of members on the Census Committee; the acquisition of training material; and the printing of brochures and conducting of a pilot survey.

A census for agriculture, Mr. Chairman, will be defined as the collection of quantitative information relevant to the status of the agriculture sector, including that of individuals attached to agricultural holdings on a

national basis. This is very strategic information which will help us to get a very clear picture of the status of the agriculture sector in respect of the quantitative information. Obviously, this would put the Ministry's officials and the Government at large in a better position in regard to its decision making activities.

The Planning Unit, Mr. Chairman, will also be involved in a foreign management and agri-business programme. The specific object of the foreign management and agri-business programme is to provide small farmers with the skill and techniques required to improve competitiveness and to increase agricultural output by 5 per cent per annum over the next five years. Naturally, this project will entail providing advice and training to the farming community; foreign planning and wider aspects of foreign management; preparation, updating and analysis of crop and livestock budgets; preparation and analysis of foreign models as well as the implementation of these models; the conducting of foreign management surveys; conducting of workshops in the area of marketing, planning, record keeping and basic economic principles and performance.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, one can appreciate the importance of this type of work. All of us in this Honourable Chamber are agreed that one of the things we cannot do in agriculture in Barbados is to have the status quo extrapolated into the future as a means of repositioning the agricultural sector's scope with the pressures which have been put on it coming from the South. I dare say we do have some structural deficiencies which are of our own making in Barbados that we have to deal with as well. We need to ensure that those persons who are desirous of continuing in agriculture are knowledgeable about the appropriate farm management techniques employed in this competitive environment.

In respect of agricultural trade, I have spent some time in my introductory remarks indicating to this Honourable Chamber that the trade and trade arrangements are important issues as far as the agriculture sector in Barbados is concerned and I listed those key developments which have taken place in the international and regional environment which would have implications for the future of the agriculture sector.

Mention was made of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas in 2005, the World Trade Organization and the changes which are being made through the Lomé IV ACP-EU arrangements. These initiatives will also have implications for factors such as

employment, market share and competitiveness which would ultimately affect the standard of living of those dependent upon the sector.

As I said earlier, it is therefore important that members of the agricultural community be made aware of these arrangements and how they can impact on the agricultural sector and, therefore, their livelihood. So the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will be spending some time during the next financial year sensitizing the farming community to the implications of what is going on in the international trade discussions within WTO arrangements.

With respect to export promotions, the Ministry, recognizing the implication for agriculture of the WTO commitment, is placing emphasis on the enhancement of competitiveness of the local agriculture sector and will be seeking to identify a select list of commodities which have export potential. We will be throwing our full weight behind the development of the sector in that regard in order to satisfy the niche market and the export area which can take the sector forward.

In our export promotion drive, Mr. Chairman, we have to make use of facilities and systems which are already in place and we need to establish closer linkages with our foreign missions and consulates. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, immediately after the last General Election, took firm decisions to amalgamate the work of the Foreign Trade Delegates with the Foreign Affairs Delegates. So, within the consulates around the world where the Barbados Missions are, we will find that there are opportunities there for us to use the human resources in order to help us to deal with this export drive and we will be seeking to use those facilities. Naturally the Honourable Minister for Christ Church East who has equity at the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (BIDC) - we can always go through his Ministry in order to get some help in that regard.

Last, but not least, Mr. Chairman, the Planning Unit will be involved in a very important project and that is an inter-sectoral linkage project for which I have a passion.

The Honourable Member for St. James North made a very important point when he said that there has been a lot of talk in this country about establishing linkages between agriculture and the other sectors, including tourism, but nothing by way of concreteness has been done for us to establish a strong linkage between agriculture and the other sectors.

But, Mr. Chairman, we at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in collaboration with the hospitality sector and other users of agricultural commodities, are determined to make sure that this linkage,

which can bring tremendous benefit to the agricultural sector be forged.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member will explain that statement.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Let me explain.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have one minute to explain.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: The thinking behind trying to establish a strong linkage between agriculture and the hospitality sector, for example, is this. The Government has placed tremendous emphasis on the development of our tourism product. We recognize that tourism is our main foreign exchange earner and is the engine of growth for this economy and it would be a shame - nothing short of a colossal shame, and the Member for St. Lucy will agree - if we should develop a tourism product to maturity that an agriculture sector should be lagging behind. We are saying that the opportunity exists for Barbados, being a small nation, to develop the agricultural sector, if for no other reason than to see the increase in numbers of tourists. But what this requires, Mr. Chairman, is that precise information on the tastes and preferences of the tourists be known, information on the supply potential of the producers of the agricultural commodities be known, and that we use that information from both sides of the line to ensure that what is required in the tourism sector and the other areas can be met by the local agricultural producers.

So Mr. Chairman, this is a project that we in the Ministry are very excited about. I, myself, have convened a number of meetings with the hospitality sector and interests in the supermarket sub-sector in order to sensitize them about the importance of this particular project and to impress upon them the areas in which they can contribute to this initiative so that they can view it in a wider perspective and see it as a national response brought to bear on the agriculture sector from without. And we are saying that we should put our hands, heads and pockets together in this regard to ensure that the agriculture sector is maintained.

One of the things that it will force the farmers to do is to organize themselves better, to put more emphasis on scheduling, to put proper emphasis on marketing, to put more emphasis on producing quality products, because the importing sector will not settle for anything less than high-quality products and they will be very quick to tell us, Mr. Chairman, that there are alternatives elsewhere. But, unfortunately, those alternatives can be found at external points and we need to ensure that we view the reliance on those external sources for agricultural commodities but...

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is now sixty-one seconds. I will ask you to wind up and come again.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: But the local sector would have to ensure that they can produce in the right quantities, that they can produce at the right quality and there is timeliness of production in order to maintain those strong linkages with the users of the agricultural commodities, in particular the tourism sector. I thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr Chairman, I rise again to speak on this particular Head and to make the point that I cannot understand, Sir, how it is that foreign people have a right to sell in Barbados without licences but yet we are asking the masses of Barbados to first apply in order to get a licence to work. A farmer or producer, anywhere in the world, does not need a licence or permit to operate in Barbados but the masses must first have a licence to sell or work in Barbados.

I am saying that any future Democratic Labour Party government would have to recognize that the right to work cannot be dictated by a licence and that we, as a matter of policy, would have to abolish the right for a licence to sell. No vendor in Barbados would need a licence again to have the right to work in Barbados and I am also calling on the Government, because they still have a couple of years before calling the next General Elections, to make sure that when the public markets are constructed that the Government leaves provision for installing air-conditioning units for the simple reason that we cannot ask our farmers to produce vegetables and to sell those vegetables in the same type of market that we expected them to sell in years before. For we must understand, Sir, that the life of the vegetable is affected by the heat of the day and we must provide the necessary facilities ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I know you would like that. You did not think about that one. Do not worry. We must provide the right atmosphere, Sir ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Well, you did not bring it up so I can only come to the conclusion...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is right, boy, first for the gun.

Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am saying, Sir, that the produce from the farmers of Barbados must be protected and because someone is a vendor, it does not necessarily mean that he must continue to operate in a market without

proper air-conditioning facilities because it helps when one has to go into the Palmetto Square Public Market which was recently constructed and recognize that the air-condition...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: It is. Now. Thank you...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am happy to hear, Sir, because the Minister knows very well that I know about that market. So do not mind the Honourable Member that is supposed to be Minister of Tourism who does not know the linkage between agriculture and tourism. He thinks only about the export market and not the internal forces that can involve tourism.

So, I am very happy to hear, Sir, that, because we promised the vendors in the Palmetto Square Public Market that we would correct that problem for them, the Minister has already done that. And I thank him, because he is aware of the promise I made because he spoke to me on that particular matter when I came from over there, and I am happy.

So I am saying that we also have to recognize that it is not just air-conditioning the market. We also need to give those farmers who are dealing with fresh produce an incentive or rebate to make sure that they can buy the necessary equipment that they can place their vegetables on in order to expand the life of the vegetables.

I know the Minister will tell me that there are facilities over there too, but I know that there are only racks over there, so do not come and tell me about the facilities. And not R-A-T-S, I said R-A-C-K-S, the things to put the vegetables on...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: No, I know you all have something to do with rats. I have to explain that to you, you know...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, the main problem facing the agricultural sector today happens to be rats - R-A-T-S - and there was a time in this country when one was sure that one could go to the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS) and get free rat bait to bait the fields, the houses and everything else in Barbados. All of a sudden, Sir, it seems to me that there is some plan between the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and those people who want to sell land at the highest economic use to

use rats to make sure that the agricultural industry is destroyed and for some people in the Barbados Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) to brag about the amount of money that can be made from the sale of the lands of Barbados.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I sense the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is getting a little excited and has really gotten a little carried away...

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your point of order?

Hon. A. P. WOOD: When he is insinuating that the IADB representatives are bringing in rats, Sir, in order to destroy our agricultural sector so as to give those speculators, or whoever, the opportunity to get their land, the focus on releasing the land for activities which would yield more economic returns.

Mr. Chairman, I think that that is a little off and I do not think that we can allow that to stay in the record.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I will ask that you rephrase your statement. If you are insinuating ...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: No, no, Sir, what I am ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, please rephrase your statement.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Let me explain what I am saying, Sir. What I am saying is that the rat programme in Barbados relates to the same policy the IADB has and that, if we allow rats to overtake the agricultural and sugar industries, what was suggested by the IADB will be easily implemented by the rat programme that is happening in Barbados right now. And I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that we have to recognize that if we are ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You walked into that, boy, not me...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Proceed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: What I am saying, Mr. Chairman, is that we have to recognize that, if we are serious about feeding our people, we also have to make sure that the best market facilities are provided to make sure that, in the same way that the large supermarkets would want to import vegetables and have the best conditions to display those vegetables, the local produce which would now be put on sale by the vendors of Barbados must be in the same competitive conditions.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I do not think that the Minister of Agriculture would want to get up on a point of order on that particular point because I think he understands quite well what I speak of. That is why I feel strongly about that, Sir, and I feel that incentives should also be given. This is a point I could never understand. A farmer can get a duty-free vehicle because he is farming but the person who has to market the produce for the farmer cannot get a duty-free vehicle.

I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that the person marketing the produce for the farmer, must be given the right to have the right type of vehicle with duty-free concessions to market the local produce. I do not agree, Sir, with any of those who feel that that right should only be for the farmer. The farmer's job is to produce but you also have to look beyond production to make sure that the product is well marketed and that it is delivered in the right condition.

If we do not do that, Sir, you will find that the produce coming from overseas will land here in cold storage and the capacity to last longer is there but the farmer, because of the climatic conditions of Barbados, will find that his produce can only last two or three days. That is why we need to provide the facilities with the right types of conditions for those people who market the produce, the same way that the supermarket owners are able to buy that type of equipment to make sure that the foreign produce is stored at the right conditions.

I am saying to the Minister of Agriculture that if he does not do it in the two years' time that he has to do it, I can assure him, Sir, that the farmers of Barbados and those marketing their produce will be rest assured that they will get that pledge from the Democratic Labour Party where we will be implementing these issues in the next possible time, which is shortly.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: We also have a problem in Barbados with our fishermen, Sir, where our fishermen cannot now get ice as they like. I am calling on the Minister of Agriculture to recognize that in the same way there is a linkage between agriculture and tourism, there is also a linkage between the fishermen and the hotel sector.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am saying, Sir, that our fisherman must be afforded the right to be able to come to these shores and leave in the shortest

turnaround time. I am calling on the Minister of Agriculture, a man who comes from St. Philip, to understand, Sir, that fishermen need not go out fishing and have to remain a whole week in Barbados before they can get ice, and sometimes even as long as two weeks to get ice.

I cannot accept that, Sir, because we have to recognize that we are allowing people to import fish into Barbados because we are not allowing our fishing boats to get ice when they want it. That is why people could easily tell you that there is a shortage of certain types of fish and they need to import.

I am blaming the importation of fish on the Government because they fail to provide the capacity at the various markets that provide the ice so that the fishermen of Barbados can go and bring the catch to supply the market. Sir, no one can fault that and I would advise the Minister of Agriculture not to dispute that particular point.

We have to recognize now, Sir, that Barbadians must understand that every sector is important to the economy and if we cannot appreciate the importance of the fishing industry, then this country will continue to fail. This is the difference between the Democratic Labour Party and Barbados Labour Party because we fully understand the needs of those people who helped to generate and create the right atmosphere within the economy.

Another problem we have, Sir, is that we have to recognize that we cannot wait on Trinidad to negotiate with us any more on any fishing agreement. We have to recognize that they have a resource that we want and, in the same way we need oil and we pay for it, that we have to come to some reasonable agreement with Trinidad so that our fishing boats can go in their fishing waters.

We cannot continue, Sir, to believe that Trinidad has a right to allow us in their waters. We have to recognize that fishing is important to Barbadians, and to Trinidadians also, and we must treat fishing as important, and if we treat it as important, then the Government of Barbados would set aside a certain sum of money every year so that the fishermen can have the right to fish in the Trinidadian waters and to bring home the catch.

If we do that, we will save a lot of foreign exchange that we are now paying for imported fish. So it is okay to talk about having to pay for licences, but you also have to recognize that because we do not pay Trinidad for the right to fish in their waters, we are now using valuable foreign exchange in buying fish from elsewhere that we could be saving.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member, you have one minute.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Already? Okay, no problem.

I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that the fishing industry must be given the same promise as the offshore industry. But the problem with this Government, Sir, is that they tend to see the offshore industry as important because they are supposed to be millionaires from overseas but the masses of people of Barbados who spend their hard-earned cash to develop an industry, they cannot recognize the importance of that industry that has been with us for many, many years and that has served us well.

I thank you.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, I am going to be very brief in this my first intervention on agriculture. I want first of all, Sir, in the five minutes or so I am going to be speaking to really and truly commend a section of the agriculture ministry which I think is very often overlooked and very often taken for granted. I believe, Sir, that the officers in that section used as their motto that "prevention is better than cure".

It is an area, Sir, in which we have had very few problems and when the Prime Minister was wrapping up this morning, he remarked that we have some excellent public officers in the public service. It came home to me then, Sir, that this is an area where we indeed have excellent public officers. I am speaking of those who work in the veterinary services and those who work as quarantine officers. I believe, Sir, that these persons have protected our agriculture over the years and we have not given them the praise that they deserve.

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Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, we have been able to keep a massive assault of the pink mealy bug out of Barbados. I believe that if it had actually got into Barbados in the same way that it got into other Caribbean countries, we could not have prevented its spread. I was in Grenada when the pink mealy bug was taking a heavy toll on Grenada's agriculture. It devastated Grenada, Sir. It defoliated crops. Agricultural crops were ruined. Indeed, it was not confined to agricultural crops because I think it destroyed plant life generally in Grenada.

I think that our plant quarantine officers were extremely vigilant and so managed to curb and control all of this. I believe that our agricultural production could have gone. I believe that agriculture could have been destroyed. I am saying that were it not for the sterling work of those officers, Barbados could have been ruined as well. You may call it speculation, Sir. You may call it what you will,

but I believe that they saved this country millions of dollars. That is my opinion because, as I have said, I saw the devastation which was wrought by the pink mealy bug in Grenada. I think that this is one area of which the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development could be justly proud.

I recall, Sir, that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development used to have an arrangement with places like St. Vincent and the Grenadines where our quarantine officers would go down to St. Vincent to examine the fruits and vegetables which were to be imported into Barbados and if they did not give the green light that things there were being handled properly, then they would not have agreed to the importation of those fruits and vegetables into Barbados.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the other Caribbean islands are our neighbours and we did not want to squeeze them by telling them that we were not taking anything from them. We still wanted to give them an opportunity so that we could still continue to import from them. Therefore, our officers went there to examine the fruits and vegetables and if they were okay then they would say if they could come to Barbados.

I understand that on a few occasions we have spotted this insect in Barbados but I know that the officers are still continuing to do their best to get rid of it. I understand that it is virtually impossible to eradicate it so they are using things like ladybirds and so on to keep it under control.

The point I am making is that, while it is present in Barbados, it will not be able to do us any economic damage and I think that is the point that we need to make. Whereas certain countries could not control it, we are able to control it to the point where, even if it is here, it will be here at a minimum but really and truly it will not be able to do any economic damage to our crops. Of course, a lot is going to depend on the cooperation of the public in this regard and I would hope that the public will cooperate with the officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and that if persons spot this insect in their area they will call their officers and let them know so that they can deal with it.

Sir, while I am on this point I also want to commend the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the steps which they recently took in trying to keep "Foot and Mouth" disease as far away from Barbados as possible because I believe that this "Foot and Mouth" disease, from what I have been hearing, is akin to an aeroplane and has the potential to wipe out our entire livestock industry because obviously that will not be too difficult to do in a country like ours. I think that one large farm in any European country would in itself be the aggregate of the entire Barbadian livestock industry and a lot of those large

farms have already had to slaughter thousands and thousands of animals and that gives you some idea of the devastation which this particular plague can cause if it were ever to enter Barbados.

Therefore, Sir, we cannot take any chances with it and I would therefore want to commend the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for taking those initiatives, like asking visitors to Barbados to wipe their feet on the special mat at the Airport, the incineration of international garbage and the banning of meat products from certain countries. We cannot be too careful, therefore I want to commend them.

I think that many of us take that Veterinary Services Section as well as the Quarantine Section for granted and I believe that this country is really and truly indebted to the officers who work in that section of government.

I am indebted to you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Chairman, I want to make a contribution to this debate on agriculture by picking up from where - it is very seldom that I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy as there is often not much to pick from the contributions that he makes - he highlighted the importance of the fishing industry.

I want to make the observation that, in terms of fisheries as a component of agriculture, there is perhaps greater potential in the ocean which surrounds us than on the land area on which we stand. In fact, if one looks at the Caribbean area there is a greater area of ocean than there is an area of land mass when placed within the context of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, where there is this effort to ensure that there is a single economic space in operation in the Caribbean that cannot be considered complete until we have resolved all of the difficulties which continue to beset efforts of individual member states to fully exploit the waters of the Caribbean sea.

In short, Sir, how could we truly have a single economic space, for example, as we have here within Barbados or as there is within the European Union or within the Federation which we know as the United States of America, where the member states of the Caribbean have agreed that we would vigorously pursue and work towards the attainment of the free movement of goods, which we have pretty much achieved; the free movement of capital which has been enshrined in the new Protocols which have amended the Treaty of Chaguaramas; the free movement of people which is being implemented on a phased basis starting with artists and university graduates and the likes; where we can have in this CARICOM Single Market and Economy the right of establishment whereby under Protocol II we have now guaranteed that business persons from within the region have the right to establish

businesses in other Caribbean countries without let or hindrance while at the same time restricting the free movement of fishing vessels within the Caribbean region?

It cannot be consistent with a CARICOM Single Market and Economy that the export figures of any member state should include imprisoned fishermen from another member state. In short, Sir, the many exports which we take from our friends in CARICOM, and we ourselves are major exporters to CARICOM, we cannot include fishermen that have been imprisoned for fishing in the waters of the Caribbean. I really want to salute the efforts which the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade have been making in seeking to bring this particular difficulty to some happy resolution. We have not reached there yet but we certainly have been able to catch the attention of our neighbours in the Caribbean region, most particularly Trinidad and Tobago which is to the south-west of us.

When we consider, Sir, that Trinidad and Tobago is able to benefit from the sale of its energy to Barbados, and the sale of a substantial portion of its manufactured products to Barbados, and would have benefited from and have had the freedom to invest in tourism and financial services and, indeed, manufacturing in Barbados, then the time has clearly come for us to review our relationship and the nature of the flow of benefits when, in truth and in fact, we have not been able to convince them at the bargaining table to bring these matters to resolution.

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Hon. R. R. FARLEY: There are other matters, about which I am not at liberty to speak at this time, which have come to hand which I believe will strengthen the hand of the Barbados negotiating team. It will also speak to the mutuality of interest in having a clear demarcation of the various areas of the Caribbean Sea and having reciprocal rights for the exploitation of the resources of the Caribbean Sea that will see us bringing this matter to resolution.

Sir, the matter of the freedom to fish in the region is only one of the challenges facing the fishing industry. Indeed, Sir, in my constituency where we have one of the oldest fishing villages in Barbados, Silver Sands, many of these challenges beset our fishermen. They are concerned about their right to make their livelihood without having to face the hardship of prison in a foreign land.

Also, Sir, there is tremendous concern about safety generally at sea. When we consider the high cost in human pain and suffering associated with loss of life at sea, or even sometimes just the mere doubt, wonder and worry when a fisherman goes missing for a while, and when we

consider the cost which Government has to incur as it uses the resources of the Coast Guard on a search and rescue mission, when we factor in the resources of the Coast Guards of other Caribbean countries, there is a significant cost associated with the risk of going to sea.

Sir, I believe that the time has come for the Ministry of Agriculture to look in the direction of being more aggressive in ensuring that the vital interests of Barbados and the people of Barbados are protected by granting even more assistance to the fishing industry by way of a focus on safety. For example, Sir, in the same way how we as a country recognized when there was the need to move the industry from the sail boats to motor launches in the 1950s, we provided a partial grant for the acquisition of engines for those boats. In the same way, Sir, when we wanted to move the industry from day boats to ice boats so that we could go out into longer distances and we could catch a larger quantity of fish, we put incentives in place. In addition to what incentives are there, I believe that the suggestion of the fishermen of Silver Sands has some merit and will obviously have to be subjected to rigorous tests of availability of resources. I believe that up-front contributions by way of partial financing of the basic safety equipment that is required, such as life jackets, basic supplies, larger life boats and vessels, would go a long way to enabling our very brave fishermen who represent a very important aspect of the cultural history of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, as you would know from being associated with persons in your constituency who are involved in the fishing industry, they are very strong, brave and independent persons, not influenced readily by outside influences, even political influences. For that, Sir, you have to give them your total respect. I believe that because they make such a great contribution to feeding the nation and they make such sacrifice in doing this that we need to do all that we can to ensure their safety.

Sir, the other challenges facing the fishing industry are those which the Government is already addressing. These relate to building up capacity within the sector. Mention has been made of the challenges which were faced in the past with ice. I must congratulate the Ministry of Agriculture for the efforts that they have made to address this problem head on. They are still not out of the woods yet. But all of us who spend time with fishermen realize that time lost, like in any business, is money lost. When you have a boat, whether you are a boat owner or fisherman, and that boat is not able to sail for lack of ice, then in truth and in fact you are preventing that fisherman from making his livelihood.

Sir, I am pleased to note that the Ministry of Agriculture has spent considerable sums both in terms of its own investment in the Bridgetown Fishing Terminal with its own ice-making facility, as well as a private sector

solution. This is in the process of implementation at the Oistins Fish Market in order to allow a private sector entity to construct additional ice-making equipment for the supply of that all-important commodity to the fishing sector.

Sir, the facilities that have been provided are bursting at their seams. The Bridgetown Fishing Terminal, Oistins Terminal and the facilities associated with them are not only required to accommodate fishermen by way of being landing sites, but also accommodate fish vendors. Anyone who visits the facilities, Sir, will be aware of the fact that there is now a great disconnection between the number of persons that the facilities were originally designed for and the number whom we have had to allow to operate in the facilities.

Sir, I am very pleased that these Estimates also include provision for the expansion at the main fish markets of Barbados in order to facilitate this. Of course, the Honourable Minister will speak in due course about Consett Bay and Skeetes Bay as major landing sites.

In short, Sir, I want to salute the Minister of Agriculture for giving the support to the fishermen of Barbados, and in particular the fishermen of Christ Church generally, but especially Silver Sands. We pledge our support for any initiatives that he will make.

In closing, Sir, how much time?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You still have five minutes.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Fine. I want to make my other point. Whilst on the point of markets, I want to underscore the work which the Ministry is doing in providing opportunities for the small farmers of Barbados. I do not know where you buy your vegetables, Sir, but I buy my vegetables from the vendors. Sometimes on a Saturday morning, Sir, I may go down to Oistins or the car park by Cheapside Market and various other places. But the reality is that, whereas the large farmers have access to the supermarkets and restaurants and even to the export markets, the small farmers, whether they are full time or part time small farmers, have historically depended on having markets, outlets and vendors who sell in markets.

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Hon. R. R. FARLEY: A common feature in an agricultural district is for a vendor to go through during the week and make arrangements to buy the cabbage, the carrots and tomatoes from small farmers, especially part-time ones who do not have time themselves to sell, and take that produce down to Bridgetown or to Oistins or to

Speightstown, a major centre, and sell that on the weekends. The work of the Minister of Agriculture in seeking to provide upgraded and expanded facilities at all the major markets really goes to the heart of agricultural production in Barbados. So this is not about making grandiose projects. This is not just about selling. This is about production.

The persons on whose behalf I speak, persons, for example, in Sayes Court who are part of the integrated rural development programme of the 1970s - and the Honourable Member for St. Joseph knows well about that programme. When he was Minister of Agriculture, irrigation, roads and other facilities were put in place there, as well as in Fairview and Packers, which you know very well, Mr. Chairman, and other places. The point I am making, Sir, is that this Government continues to enhance the opportunity for small business persons, including those in farming, to be able to make a decent and profitable livelihood.

For many years, the Cheapside Market had become not only dysfunctional but an eyesore. So much so that there were more persons selling outside than inside and inside was empty. Similarly, Sir, the Fairchild Street Market, which this administration when it constructed the Fairchild Street bus stand had earmarked for expansion and redevelopment as part of that project, was not included in the last administration's programme so that development there would be important.

I too, Sir, want to put a plug in for the continuation of our tradition of street vending, particularly on weekends because that, too, is a part of the distribution channel for the agricultural produce of small farmers. Without those parallels or alternative market arrangements, individuals, whether they be civil servants, carpenters and other persons who have full-time jobs but who work a quarter of an acre of garden beds behind their houses and who, if they are adventurous and work as much as half an acre, collectively, when the output of these small areas is aggregated, contribute significantly to agricultural output in Barbados. Certainly, in my experience growing up in the rural part of Barbados, they contributed to the financial stability of the family and have contributed as well by extension to the financial stability of the ordinary working people of Barbados.

The Minister of Agriculture, not only by vision and foresight, but by his actions in implementing many opportunities, expanded the programme - more licences were granted for vending and marketing facilities for fish vendors as well as vendors of regular agricultural produce. The Ministry has recognized the importance of providing opportunities for small persons in agriculture.

In making my concluding remarks, Sir, I just want to plead with the Minister of Agriculture to take a second look at the Integrated Rural Development Programme which, as I said, is a 1970s, early 1980s programme of provision of irrigation and other extension services and other support within the areas as defined. There are still requests from my constituency for extension to the irrigation service and there are some requests that have been made for a look to be taken at the rates which are charged for the irrigation services. One of the major problems facing agriculture in Barbados is the lack of rainfall and therefore any efforts made under the Phase 2 of that programme to provide irrigation to a wider area adjacent to those areas done in the seventies and the eighties will certainly contribute to overall success in agriculture.

In closing, I want to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for recognising the real issues that face the real farmers of Barbados and for his alacrity in moving to address those issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I am very interested in this debate to look to the future of agriculture and to speak in terms of where we need to go. I believe that the Minister needs to make a strong statement in respect of the future of agriculture. There are a number of initiatives which he has outlined today which, I think, would be very useful in terms of protecting farmers and of great benefit to the industry generally.

There are a number of issues facing agriculture at this time in globalization and in terms of where we are with developments in agriculture - and not only locally but internationally - that make the time right for a statement on the future of agriculture in Barbados and, in particular, the future of the sugar industry.

All over the world, I think the point has been made that wherever you see strong agricultural sectors in countries there is also heavy subsidisation by the governments of those countries and therefore, we need to define, as a government, the level of subsidisation that we are willing to put into the agricultural sector and the level of subsidisation that we are willing to put into particular areas of agriculture. While we have relied on sugar to be a major revenue earner in the past, it clearly is not going to be in the future. In the absence of strong revenue earning from sugar, what other aspects of agro-economic development will we pursue so as to boost revenues coming in from agricultural exports?

It is clear that the whole future of sugar is now very much in the balance because of changes in the international market, because of changing values of currencies, because of new trading alliances that are being developed and have

been developed. There are also concerns in respect of sugar from our own ability to produce and in terms of the amount of land that we have in sugar production. It is a concern, I think, for a lot of people that, where before we were producing high yields of sugar, we have now gone to the point where our sugar production has dropped significantly over the course of the last few years, so much so that we have moved from high yield years of 1979 and 1980 to in 1999 not even being able to meet our obligations under the European Union contract.

This is a concern because it means loss of revenues where we are not able to meet our targets, where we are not able to meet our production levels. It is of concern to those persons who have the canes in the ground and who are who are the producers of sugar cane and it has implications for those people who work in the industry and it certainly has implications for the overall economy.

I think that we have to ask ourselves whether or not we are going to continue with sugar production. If we are not, then what will we put in its place? Will there be any support given to the farmers as sugar is phased out? What will be the nature of the support given to farmers as sugar is phased out?

If sugar is phased out, what other exports are we going to rely on and what does it mean for the landscape of Barbados? All of us have a view of Barbados as an island with sugar cane blowing in the breeze, and of the cane arrows that are so aesthetically pleasing. Apart from that, there are, as I understand it, benefits to growing sugar cane for soil protection, rotation of crops and so on.

In the event that sugar is no longer produced seriously in Barbados, what will happen to the landscape where sugar was once planted? What are we going to put in its place? We already have in Barbados a situation where there are large parcels of land unattended, some owned by Government, some owned privately which are left to run to ruin.

When one thinks of the amount of land which is in sugar production at the moment if, in fact, it were to come out of sugar production, what state would that land go into? Would it remain in agricultural production at all? Would it be allowed to lie fallow, or would it just run to grass and look unsightly? All of these are issues with which we have to come to grips if we are talking in terms of a future for sugar or whether there is no future for sugar.

3.45 p.m.

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Miss H. E. THOMPSON: We need to know what is the position of the Government on sugar. Where it is going,

and if there is a future, and what is to be that future. Also, how are we going to deal with the fallout of those persons who produce and work in the sector?

I am not saying that it is a good or bad thing. I am simply saying that the process will have to be managed. It is my understanding that St. Kitts has made the decision that they will no longer be producing sugar cane. I do not know how they are proposing to deal with the whole management of the process of adapting to that change and transformation but certainly at the policy level we need to have a strong statement. We should perhaps look, as has been muted in here during the course of other interventions today, at strengthening our local vegetable and fruit production for local consumption as well as export and promote the use of local vegetables and crops in the tourism sector. Certainly, in the hospitality industry there is tremendous scope for the further utilization of locally grown vegetables and fruit. We should also be promoting the use of local fruit drinks. There is a whole range of fruit produce, some of which is sold and some of which goes to waste, that we can use for fruit drinks. We need to be promoting that sector of agricultural production and not only be looking to get acceptance of them within the hospitality sector but certainly to look now to export outside of the region.

I think the time has come where there will be greater acceptance of this kind of exotic fruit. Increasingly we are seeing in countries large imports of fruits and vegetables which are not grown in those countries but for which there is a market because of tourism, migratory patterns and so on.

There is, therefore, a market outside of the Caribbean for tropical fruits and vegetables and we need to exploit that market more. In fact, where we have limited land in production of these crops, if we are not going to have sugar we might think perhaps in terms of utilising more of that land but it means that we have to develop the markets. I do not know what steps are being made to develop markets outside of the region for some of the products that we have.

Looking at the Report of the Central Bank of Barbados, it is clear that our food and beverage production has dropped significantly from \$136.3 million in 1996 to \$87 million last year. That is significant because you wonder what are the levels of exports. Why are exports dropping? Why are we losing market shares? I know that some of it has been lost in respect of our relationship with Trinidad but that cannot be the only market. There is the Latin American market as well that we have to be looking towards. That is a huge market and it is sufficiently close to us that we should think in terms of exploiting it. Mind you, some of them will be producing some of the same goods that we are, but it does not mean that, in a globalized

world, we could not think in terms of exporting to them because that is how we must think.

I would be curious to hear from the Minister how the Ministry is preparing for globalization? How is the sector going to be made ready to meet the challenges of the new WTO rules?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is going to have implications for the kind of farming that we do, our methods of production, the way we label our goods and the kinds of environmental protection that we use. We have to be able to start sensitising those persons who are working on the ground at the level of production and the farmers. We cannot expect that once the markets are opened that we will then start preparing for the opening of the market because the preparation has to start now.

I would be curious to hear what sort of policies are in train to make us ready for globalization. Part of the challenge that we are going to have as a people is the fact that a lot of our manufacturers still think in terms of the old protected regimes and environments which existed and they think that the protectionist periods can be protracted but they cannot be. They have to be ready to face the challenges of globalization and to think in terms of export.

We have a company like Chefette for instant which should be utilising more local products and rather than trying to put a branch or two in every parish, in Barbados should be looking to export outside of Barbados and get its product into other Caribbean islands and beyond the region.

While we fear globalization, it presents opportunities for us to move our product from the local market to the regional market and international markets. There is a preparation process through which we must go if we are to become WTO ready and if we are to conform to all the new GATT arrangements. It is preparation at the level of the Government which we have responsibility for and to ensure that our citizens are prepared to adequately meet the challenges which are going to be ahead of them in the new globalized environment.

Sir, it is important as international competition increases and we are faced with other competing territories, which are also developing countries and which may be able to create greater economies of scale because of land mass or which, because of devalued dollars may be able to produce at lower base rates than we can, that we have to look at the quality of the goods that we are producing. Increasingly there is a demand internationally for organic goods. You go into markets here and outside of Barbados and see labels which say 'organically grown'. There are also organically produced vegetables, eggs, chicken and so

on. This is something that we need to start capitalizing on from now.

Mr. Chairman, if you get Barbados sugar and put it next to some of the sugar imported from various places and you smell the sugar alone, you can tell Barbados sugar by comparison to any other sugar because our sugar is superior. The smell of Barbadian sugar is sweet, it looks good and it is cleaner. If you make lemonade with it, you do not have to strain it the way you do other sugar, or resort to muslin to get it clean. That is a peculiarity on which we should be trading. It is a strength that we have in the quality of our product and it is something on which we should be relying in this world that is now calling for organic things. We can demand a premium for our Barbados rum as well because of its quality. These things are not easy to do but the opportunities are there and the markets have to be created and we need to do the preparation that will get us into the market and have our brands recognized.

It is tragic that Barbados produces high quality cotton and yet the Barbados cotton trademark is that of a Japanese company and not a Barbadian company. Japan will derive any benefits from the quality of the cotton we produce because they are the persons with the ability to put clothes out there with the Barbadian cotton label on it because we have lost that opportunity and it is really very sad.

The other day 'Style on CNN' was making the point that there is now a whole market for organically grown cotton clothing and that clothing bearing that label is demanding high prices in the designers' shops. This is a market that we can look to and then we can cross-link with the local designers who can be producing it.

We have to move from the stage where we grow cocoa and people sell it back to us as Cadbury chocolate at exorbitant prices once they have the value added. We must not only be first stage producers. We have to move to the stage where we refine and retail on the international market. Now that the markets are going to be opened, it seems to me that there is an opportunity for us to do so in a way that there was not before.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I hate to stop your flow but you have a few seconds to wind up.

3.55 p.m.

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Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I would like to make the point that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South spoke in terms of the fishing facilities at Paynes Bay. I am very pleased to see that this project is finally going to start.

When the facility is open, I trust that the people who get jobs there will come from St. James South where the facility will be located.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, a short while ago two Honourable Members raised an issue that is of enormous importance as far I am concerned. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, while discussing fishing, indicated that the time has clearly come when the type of patience that Barbados has extended to Trinidad, as far as Trinidad's conduct towards our fishermen, should be at an end. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East echoed similar sentiments.

I am going to raise an issue, with your indulgence, Mr. Chairman. Let me start by saying that when one considers the economic relationship between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago there is no question that, as far as the Trinidad and Tobago's end is concerned, they gain significantly more from trading with Barbados than Barbados gains. In other words, if there is favourable balance of trade it is in Trinidad's favour. Once one country experiences a favourable balance of trade, then its trading partner, on the other side of the coin, has an unfavourable balance of trade.

We have seen over time how states in the Eastern Caribbean have been prepared to reciprocate with Barbados. States like St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada and Dominica have, generally speaking, been very cooperative and even-handed in dealing with Barbados. If you took what the Honourable Member for Christ Church East said at its face, you will have to agree that he was telling the truth. Mr. Chairman, right now our fishermen not being accommodated by Trinidad. Trinidad at one time had an agreement with Barbados on fishing, around 1992. It worked in a lopsided way. More in Trinidad's favour than in Barbados's. Since then we had been trying to renegotiate with them.

We also have a situation, Mr. Chairman, where Barbados sells its crude to an entity in Trinidad called Petrotrin and then we buy fuel products from Petrotrin. It has emerged that, when we examine all of our trading prospects, there is no question that if Barbados sought to purchase its fuel products from elsewhere, bypassing or ignoring Trinidad, we can get a better deal. Therefore, in view of our existing relationship with Trinidad and Tobago, we kept asking Trinidad and Tobago to review the price levels at which they have been selling fuel products to Barbados. They will build up Barbados's hope and then stop, build up hope and stop and suggest that they are prepared to renegotiate.

Close to the last Trinidad and Tobago General Elections, they sent signals that, because it was election season, it was inappropriate time to negotiate. Since then, Mr. Chairman, there has been no indication, whatsoever, that the Trinidadians are prepared to offer us lower oil prices.

The Government of Barbados places as much importance on cheap energy products as it would on cheap telecommunication services. We have for some time discovered that Trinidad sells its fuel to a non-CARICOM country, America, cheaper than to a CARICOM trading partner. I repeat that, Mr. Chairman. Trinidad and Tobago sell their fuel products to the United States of America, a non-CARICOM state, at cheaper prices than they do to Barbados. Sir, we keep telling them that as much as Barbados has over time always met its CARICOM obligations, that they should consider dropping the price charged to Barbados to the same level at which they charge the United States of America.

It seems to me now that since they have not been cooperative and since we cannot extract from them any firm undertaking, the Trinidadians have now put Barbados in a position that we will have to consider actively and in a short space of time in the interest of cheaper oil prices, alternate sources of supply. Notwithstanding how they may react, considering that they would like us to invoke the regime of CARICOM policy, Barbados' interest must now be certainly protected. We have given and given, heeded and yielded and they have not reciprocated.

There are other things that they have done to us which I cannot indicate at this point in public. The point is, Mr. Chairman, I am, personally, left with no alternative but to advise my colleagues that, in view of the fact that the Trinidadians have not been cooperative in terms of lowering prices, we are going to have, in light of Venezuela's more attractive offer, to actively consider dealing with Venezuela. There is only one problem in the way. Since the Government has not mentioned it, I am not prepared at this point to indicate all the specific proposals that I will be putting to my colleagues.

It cannot be fair, just as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East said about fishing, for Trinidad to be in the same regional grouping as we and for them to be extracting their pound of flesh on their terms and getting significantly more out of it than they are prepared to offer in return.

Mr. Chairman, there is another matter which was raised by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that I need to address before too much time passes. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, in looking at the whole question of the restructuring of the sugar industry, hinted that the Barbados Light and Power Company was being kept back,

through inaction, in deciding whether or not they were going to go the route of pro-generation. Let me cast some light on this, Mr. Chairman.

The position is this. If you go to the private sector sugar farmers, some of them have indicated that they can live with two factories and some are saying that they could live with one factory, so there is uncertainty among them.

4.05 p.m.

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Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Ultimately, the Government is going to have to decide what is good for Barbados but, Mr. Chairman, the whole question is this. Even when a single-factory option is actively considered, even before pursuing it, much as it has cost implications and cost benefits to be achieved through running one factory as opposed to three, there are still other considerations as well.

There is no question, Mr. Chairman, that the French experience in Reunion and neighbouring Guadeloupe has suggested that an ultramodern sugar factory is very much a power plant, but we still have to take into account that, even though that is so, Mr. Chairman, the Barbados Light & Power, even before the restructuring of the sugar industry became a fashionable thing, has been looking at alternate sources of energy and has been looking at non-traditional ways of fuelling their engines. For example, they have been looking at the potential of using wind energy and other forms of energy. They have recently, in the last 2½ years installed an ultramodern turbine by the Grantley Adams International Airport, but the fact remains that the BL&P is not going to make up its mind unless it takes into account its own commercial interests and how best those commercial interests will be served. There is no question that they are prepared to co-operate but they still have, Mr. Chairman, to look at a number of options, taking into account costs, reliability of energy, risk taking at the level of moving to unknown sources and such like. But I do not know if they can, at this stage, say that because we have not yet fully decided how many sugar factories we are going to have that we are actually keeping back the BL&P, because even though the BL&P seems keen to work in the context of a situation where coal generation is going to be used, there still are other concerns.

Mr. Chairman, the French at Guadeloupe are going for coal generation, using coal when the sugar crop season is not on. The question is, is coal an environmentally friendly fuel? And the answer is "no". Another question, Mr. Chairman is, do you have the capacity to off-load coal and transport it at a cheap cost to a safe place of storage which is close to the coal generation plant? That is also another question. Are large amounts of coal located in the

wrong place not capable of self-igniting? In any event, when we contemplate this whole question of coal generation, Mr. Chairman, we have to take into account serious environmental considerations and, in a situation where Barbados might have the capacity to generate from things other than coal that would be environmentally friendly, this would have to be something to be taken into account.

Of course, on the overall contemplation of where you are going, a number of other matters would have to be taken into account. Where do you locate? What is the state of your infrastructure? What are your start-up costs in a situation where, as I said earlier, the private sector farmers are the ones who would be actively doing the farming, with the Government being just a facilitator? But the story does not just end there, Mr. Chairman. Even though we might maintain an argument here that the reduction in sugar factories will somewhat reduce costs, do you not know, Mr. Chairman, that there are still sugar farmers who, at the field stage, are experiencing difficulty managing cost? So, while we are going to submit that a one-factory option will achieve some economies at a factory stage, there are still those at the field stage who will tell you that they are experiencing cost problems, bearing in mind that what they end up getting for revenue is often lower than the total expenditure they have incurred.

What this means then, Mr. Chairman, is that even though the scenario is one where everyone should pursue speedily, we still cannot be so headstrong, as we said, as to go and make a rapid decision overnight without considering all the variables and without taking into account all pertinent factors which must be resolved before final determination.

I just want to mention that, in principle, coal generation offers some attractiveness. In principle the BL&P pays co-operatives but, at the end of the day, it is always, Mr. Chairman, what is that bottom line. I thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I rise for a brief intervention to this debate and to say that I want to register my support to the Minister of Agriculture and to the programme which he has outlined this year.

I believe that this is a very challenging time to the management of that Ministry and in the circumstances where he is confronting, not only international challenges, but domestic challenges. And what do I mean by that, Sir?

There is absolutely no doubt that the process of globalization and the commitments which this country has

given to the World Trade Organization with respect to liberalization of our markets will have some level of impact on the competitiveness in the local industry and their capacity, not only to thrive but, to survive.

Equally, the establishment of the Single Market and Economy in the context of the regional market, given the fact that our exchange rate as well as our cost of labour are substantially higher those of most of our brothers and sisters in other regions. Added to that, the fact that the type of soil that we have in Barbados is not the best known for a comprehensive agriculture programme, as may be the case in some of the volcanic-based countries where the quality of soil is superior. So that those challenges exist internationally for the Minister of Agriculture, but there are also domestic challenges.

There are domestic challenges which relate to the attitude of persons who live in Barbados and who, for reasons combining history, culture and, some may even say, some form of backwardness, have moved away from the agricultural sector, believing that working in the agricultural sector represents a backward step rather than recognizing that unless this country can properly harness its agricultural base, in terms of food production, the production of sugar and, indeed I maintain, in respect of the management of a strong fishing industry, we would never be able to fully realize our potential as a nation. It is a fundamental aspect of the governance of a country and the governance of a community that you must be able to have access to a steady food supply.

Therefore, those in this Chamber in the 1930s or 1940s who saw it necessary where they passed a legislative amendment requiring persons charged with the production of sugar, in particular, to have a certain percentage of their plantation output related to food production knew what they were doing because, at the end of the day, we live in a world where we do not have control over a large number of variables and, if the worse ever happens, we must be able to guarantee a certain level of our food security, even if not fully for the future or even if not in an unlimited manner.

4.15 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I am one of those who believe very strongly that there must be serious support given by Government in respect of building the resource capacity of the agricultural sector. It is for that reason, Sir, that I took the distinct decision of inviting to serve as the Chairman of the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, an agriculturist of note in this country and one who continues to earn his living through farming.

I believe that the training at the Polytechnic must reflect elements to broaden and deepen the base of the numbers of persons going into the agriculture sector and who have an interest in that sector. Mr. Bethell has done a wonderful job so far in helping us to look at the restructuring of the programme.

We are also about to launch very shortly a programme in hydroponics as well and we hope that the interest that we have inculcated in the boat building programme, which has in fact led to the completion of one small boat already, will continue such that youngsters will see a career in respect of not only land-based agriculture but indeed the exploitation of our marine resources.

It is absolutely critical, therefore, in that context that the work, which the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Energy and the Environment have been doing, in respect of settling the vexatious issue of our fishermen being able to fish without fear of being locked up and fear of receiving a criminal conviction, be settled.

There is obviously not any great hurry on the part of other countries in the region but I believe that the Government of Barbados must use every strategic opportunity to be able to enforce those agreements which allow us to properly exploit the exclusive economic zone which we are entitled to by reason of the Law of the Sea Convention.

I also want to say, Sir, that clearly, we have reached a point where there are a lot of mixed signals with respect to the sugar industry and I believe that we should listen very closely to the words of the Minister of Agriculture. He has spoken already quite forcibly today, and I trust that he will speak again before this debate is over, but there must be a level of commitment in this country to recognizing that we simply cannot afford to have our land run to bush. The Honourable Member for St. James South spoke eloquently to the issue that we cannot afford for our land to run to bush and that there must be a determination within the Government at what point can we afford to provide the price support that is necessary to keep the sugar industry running.

I believe that there are strong cultural and ecological reasons, apart from the foreign exchange that is earned, and there is absolutely no doubt that the challenges in respect of the reducing receipts from the European Union, particularly with the shift to Euro currency, make the situation and decision more difficult. But the reality is, Mr. Chairman, that in the past we have taken decisions to subsidise major foreign exchange earnings sectors, just as we have done with sugar but we have done so in tourism. We continued to run Caribbean Airways even though it was making financial losses because we understood the importance of

being able to bring passengers into this country all through the 1980s. We have done so in manufacturing. This year there are \$5 million in the Estimates for direct support to those manufacturing entities that want to be able to continue to export and to be competitive, both within the region and outside the region.

While some of the costs that the sugar industry admittedly has dealt with within the last ten to fifteen years have been staggering, the reality is that I do believe that with a change of focus as to what we expect from the industry in terms of product, we may be able to look at better options in respect of why we should continue. Those ecological reasons, those cultural reasons and the possibility of better financial returns as well as the earning of foreign exchange must be therefore at the foremost part of our head.

We feel, Sir, that obviously there has to be a resolution on the factory issue and I trust that the judgment the Minister of Agriculture will come to will be one that takes those foregoing matters into concern. If it can be done while at the same time still assisting other sectors in the economy from having to duplicate expenditure, then I believe that all of us stand to benefit, both financially and economically, from that decision.

Equally, Sir, yesterday I spoke in the second reading about the fact that we have reached a stage in our development where every aspect of human endeavour, both in the economy and the society, was undergoing need for restructuring or reform. The sugar industry in terms of the kinds of factories that we use in Barbados is no different.

Sir, I saw the programme produced by the Government Information Service in 1961 that was shown, I believe a week ago, on CBC television called "Green and Gold." It went through in a very detailed way - very well done - the processes within a sugar factory. I daresay, Sir, that there is absolutely no difference today, except that the factory may look even worse and more rundown today than it did at the time that that documentary was filmed.

We have, therefore, to recognize that we cannot compete with other countries in the world which have used technology to increase their yield at the end of the twentieth, the beginning of the twenty-first century, based on production mythologies that were valid at the turn of the nineteenth and into the early part of the twentieth century. Therefore, there have to be decisions taken to reflect that if we want to participate in respect of a global economy in terms of the trading of sugar, we need also to update the processes for the production of sugar, especially if it means that we can increase the yield, and especially if there are other economic benefits.

Sir, I will now address a comment made by the Leader of the Opposition in respect of clear signals from

the Government and the statement by the Chairman of the BACT in his foreword about monies from the sub-division of land going to help to reduce the debt on the highly indebted plantations. Let me say, Sir, that this Government, through the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, has always said that we support a policy that would look at the sub-division of the factory yards or the rab lands if that is going to help reduce the level of indebtedness of the industry.

But as recently as the beginning of this debate in the second reading speech, the Right Honourable Prime Minister made it clear again that we are not supporting the removal of more lands out of agriculture because we do believe that there is a place for strong agricultural production in this economy. Therefore, it is nothing short of mischievous to suggest that because the Chairman of the BACT referred to the possibility of raising revenue from sub-divisions in respect of some of the highly indebted plantations, that it was an indication that we wanted all of the lands to come out of sugar and to go into planting houses. That is not the case and we maintain that where there is land that clearly cannot be used for agriculture, or the factory yards or the houses, that those therefore are capable of being sold off to help reduce that level of indebtedness.

The temptation is always there and while at sometime we have to recognize that land must yield its greatest economic value, the question is, what is the definition of greatest economic value? I suggest to you that a country that is riddled with bush all over or a country that has serious environmental problems will have major problems in being able to sustain a climate of investor confidence that will allow other aspects of this economy to flourish properly. And we have to recognize that, in addition to everything else, we have a historical, psychological and cultural advantage, whether aspects of it may have been negative along the way, but we have a historic, psychological and cultural advantage in the production of sugar and its by-products down to rum.

We have a name that immediately gives us a value in terms of the level of goodwill and therefore, by extension, an economic return that other countries in the world would kill for - the mention of Barbados' sugar, as the Honourable Member for St. James South said, or the Barbados rum. And perhaps we have to look therefore at the fact that, in a new factory, we have a greater level of potential to produce different grades of sugars which give us greater options in terms of our marketing of our products and hopefully without having to rely exclusively on the arrangements with the European Union which are sure to come to an end, even if not within a decade, then at some point thereafter, by reason of the shifts in a paradigm in respect of subsidization and raw commodities from the developing world.

4.25 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I want to say very quickly that the concept of working toward inter-sectoral linkages between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and other ministries is one that I readily support and will work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in achieving.

There is absolutely no doubt that we have left room in the programme of curriculum reform for the possibility of creating one of the secondary schools as a centre of excellence for the production of agricultural commodities so that we can introduce children from an early age to better methods of production as well as to help foster healthier attitudes toward production within agriculture and we want to discuss this with the Minister of Agriculture.

At the post secondary level, one of the most difficult problems that we had and have not been able to solve satisfactorily is the replacement of a plot of land for the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP) for the one which we had down at Eckstein Village which has now been taken over by the Ministry of Housing for housing. We need urgently to get back a plot of land for the students at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP) and the Barbados Community College (BCC).

At the level of the University of the West Indies, the School of Agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago has been seeing, unfortunately, a decline in the number of persons applying for entry to that faculty. One of the things that we have done on the Council of the University of the West Indies is to recognize that there has to be a greater public relations thrust in terms of attracting young people into the study of agriculture and all of its related fields because if we cannot master the land and the sea around us we will find ourselves in serious problems by being more dependent on other people from overseas and, in fact, imposing on ourselves the very same re-colonization process that we are trying to ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I will ask the Honourable Member to wind up now. You have one more minute.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Before I wind up, I have to thank the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for agreeing that the planning works will start this year for the vending facility on Jackson Main Road and that the Minister of Housing and Lands would ensure that the property is urgently acquired from BARFINCOR which has been waiting for the Government to take some action in respect of it for the last two years. This is a building that has been abandoned and closed for almost a decade. The

Honourable Member for St. Thomas and I have identified it.

The Barbados Labour Party Manifesto speaks to the establishment of a vending and community facility there, on the model of the Gall Hill facility, Sir, with which you are well familiar. Given that you have said to me how successful the Gall Hill model has been and what a difference it has made to the residents of Christ Church East-Central, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas and I feel that the residents in Jackson, Arthur Seat and the surrounding areas should have that opportunity. In any event, allied as it is to Warrens, it is becoming a town centre in its own right but a lot of the residents of the area cannot afford to pay the high commercial rates at the Warrens site so we need to make space available to them on the side of Jackson so that there is a contiguous flow of commercial activity - but not at the prices that are normally charged in the Warrens area.

I thank you, Sir, and look forward to the support of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and to say to him that after he finishes Jackson we may need him to do some brief work at Hothersal Turning.

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting be suspended until 4.45 p.m. today.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 4.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

4.30 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

When the suspension was taken the House was in Committee of Supply and to that it will now revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (CONT'D)

HEAD 25 (RESUMED)

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is in Committee of Supply.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased to have listened to the speech made by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development prior to the adjournment for lunch. I think he was extremely clear and positive in the statements that he has made in adumbrating the policies which we should follow in Barbados.

I have listened to all of those who have spoken in this debate and I think that I am correct to sum up by saying that all of us are of the view that there is a future for agriculture in Barbados and that there is a role for sugar in that future. I am very glad to hear that, Sir, because I do not know of any country that has moved to economic self-sufficiency or even to a high standard of living without in some way retaining an agricultural base.

I can illustrate that from a country as small as New Zealand, which I believe is a model for how agriculture should be run. Being competitive in the area in which it produces agricultural products, it is not like the United States of America in hiding subsidies to its farmers and yet it has managed to maintain a very strong agricultural programme.

Or I may illustrate it by Switzerland. Many people think of the Swiss only in terms of a country which is into banking and financial services. Many of us eat Swiss cheese which is some of the best cheese in the world but the Swiss have maintained a strong agricultural programme although, I must confess that, like the United States of America, they have found a way of offering their subsidies.

I believe that we should not hesitate in this country if we have to subsidize agriculture, particularly the sugar industry, in the interest of the country as a whole. I make no apologies for that, Sir. I live in the country. I realized that there are about, I would say, 6 000 people in agriculture today. I know someone gave a lower figure than that.

I believe that were it not for the maintenance of the sugar industry and the agricultural sector our countryside would be a whole vast wasteland. I do not subscribe to the view that we should take our land fully out of agriculture in order to accommodate more and more concrete structures. That does not meet with my approval. I would find it difficult to give my support to the Government if that became the policy of the party to which I belong.

So I am hoping that the Minister is in a position to give us some insight into the report of the task force that was set up to look at the sugar industry because I believe that the persons who comprised that group have worked long and hard and I believe that they would have brought their expertise to help us in making the decisions that must be made.

I want to say this, Sir, that we cannot delay the decision for much longer. Farmers need to have some certainty in planning, not merely for the next crop or for the next three years but I would think that we must look to the next 15 years. In my view - it is not a scientific view but the view of someone who has an interest in these matters - we must give the farmers the opportunity to survive at least in the medium term if not in the long term. I hope when the Minister replies that he will tell us as much as he can at this stage what the recommendations are that were made for the retention of the sugar industry in order to remove the rumour mongering that is going on.

I also believe, Sir, that we have to make a decision whether we are going with three factories, two factories or one factory.

5.00 p.m.

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Hon. SIR HENRY FORDE: I have read the protagonists on all sides, the Senator, the head of the sugar producers and what not but it seems to me that there is at least a strong case for the one factory suggestion. It needs a political decision, Sir. Political decisions are never easy. I am sure that there are going to be arguments as to where you put that factory. Do you put it in St. George? Do you keep it in St. Andrew? Do you move it to St. Peter? Do you put it somewhere else?

Barbadians are sensible people and at the end of the day wherever you put it we could show Barbadians that it is to the advantage of the country as a whole to have this one sugar factory. The other persons who are going to lose out, whether it be St. Andrew, St. James, St. Peter or St. George would be satisfied with that answer.

I want to say, Sir, that I sit on the Board of the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited because of the fact that the people of Barbados own approximately 25 per cent of the Light and Power shares. The NIS is the second largest shareholder in the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited so I want to say up front that that is the position. When myself and, formerly Mr. Grantley Smith and now, Mr. Ian Carrington sit on the Board, obviously we are deeply conscious that we are speaking on behalf of money which is held in trust for the ordinary man in Barbados.

I have had sight of the various recommendations made for a coal generation plant. Those reports have been made available to the Government, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment. There has been a pretty thorough study done and I am convinced and satisfied that if we are to have one sugar factory, and we are getting assistance through a coal generation plant which will maximize the use of our bagasse, that should not take too much longer for a decision to be made, Sir.

The Honourable Member for St. James North is quite right. No business will sit down and wait for the decision of Government if it is extended for much longer. For one thing the Light and Power needs to get on with the programme for replacing some of its diesel engines at the moment and it needs to raise capital. It has already had discussions for the raising of capital so that whatever are the questions posed, and the Honourable Member for St. James North posed a series of questions, some of them are environmental questions, I do not believe that those environmental questions are beyond solution. Solutions have been found to those questions in Martinique and elsewhere where such plants have been operating.

I think that when you weigh all of the advantages and disadvantages, the advantages come down in favour of going ahead with one factory and a co-generation plant. I am not persuaded by all of those people who believe that the land of Barbados has to be cultivated all for the tourism industry. Nor am I persuaded by those who believe that we have to extend housing all over Barbados. We have a duty to leave for future generations the opportunity for food security. We must not assume that we are going to become pure importers of everything that we eat. Unless we can put that security in place, if we are so shortsighted at the moment as not to put that security in place, we would be in trouble.

Sir, I am not bothered about those people who argue that if you subsidize sugar you subsidize white people and all of that foolishness. I represent a constituency where, when I first ran in the white area of the constituency, they told the people that I was black power along with Elombe Mottley. In the black area around the people in Fordes Road, they told the people that I was a white man. That is cheap political talk that you get all of the time in Barbados until we get over all of these inhibitions about our past. Nobody is going to take us back to slavery because the young black people and the older ones like me do not believe in any colonial past. We are sure enough and confident of ourselves so as not to allow our history to keep us tied and therefore, in my view, agriculture, including sugar, has a bright future and I am pleased to tell the Minister that I am extremely pleased to see that the women of Barbados have begun to farm and to be able to drive tractors. I see them operating the equipment for cutting the

canes and very soon I hope to see many of them in ownership of the plantation lands themselves because women have more sense than us men, a lot more sense. They have been the keepers of the family for many years and while we men are wasting our time and lagging on the block...

Asides.

Hon. SIR HENRY FORDE: I am not careful. I have always been clear in my mind about this. They have been getting on with sustaining the family. That is the position. I know there are a lot of men in here who do not like to hear that point.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am not surprised that there are a lot of men who do not like to hear that point of view but I have been consistent in this because, while we are the bosses of our houses, our spouses are in control. Each one of them that you hear talking realises that.

I do not want to go off on that tangent today. I am going to get into a gender debate sometime again to tell people about this notion that men are in crisis. I want to go back to agriculture and sugar, Sir, because this is a very serious thing.

I give the Minister my full support in the views that he has been expressing and it is refreshing to see such a young, bright Barbadian, of his colour in particular, who is able to get up and deal with this issue without being afraid of those people who are going to use cheap political talk. He is looking at the real issues and making the decisions, I hope, and getting on with this matter.

Sir, I want to move on to one other thing: land for the landless. I am pleased to see that in the programme. And this is a beg now. I have a couple of farmers in Fordes Road - and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should listen because he believes that it is only in St. Lucy that they have farmers. I boast in my constituency that we produce in Christ Church West some of the best mutton. We produce a lot of milk in addition to the vegetables that we still produce. We have a group of landless farmers in Fordes Road and in that area.

We are very interested in this scheme, Sir. For environmental and other reasons I would like the Minister to tell us what are the plantations that Government owns that are being used for this purpose and whether he can get his officers to pay some attention to the gentlemen and ladies in my area who want to get into this particular scheme.

From my experience, I want to say a word about the difficulties with Trinidad & Tobago, because I believe that - I do not like patting myself - the Honourable Sir Harold

St. John, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and myself during our tenure as Ministers went a long way towards probably having one of the best periods in the relationship between Trinidad & Tobago and ourselves. That relationship is more complicated than a fishing agreement. It is more sensitive than the buying and selling of oil. As a matter of fact, within the Caribbean Community the relationship is probably the one that is more firmly based and more intricate than any other relationship.

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Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: You have to understand something about the Trinidadian psyche as well when you are negotiating with them. It would be my advice that we have to look at ways and means of making the Trinidad Government feel that it is giving nothing whilst we get what we want. We did that before with them in St. Lucy. Unfortunately the Democratic Labour Party went and sold back the Arawak Cement Plant which was a mistake.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: I say unfortunately because the cement plant is paying its way.

Sir, let me say that one of the things that Barbadian businessmen must do is to invest across borders. It is possible for us to own some of the fishing factories that are producing fish in Tobago. We are still exporting to Canada fish caught in Trinidad and Tobago waters and making money out of it. We have to look at ways that we can do joint ventures. Our fishermen and cooperatives must move into joint ventures and not merely look at the issue of demarcation of borders. Obviously, the ideal position would be for the Caribbean sea to be opened to use and to farming by Caribbean nationals as a whole. Therefore, I have great difficulty with some aspects of Caribbean politics where I find that some of the Caribbean nations find it easier to offer the Japanese the opportunity to fish within their territorial waters and exclusive zones whilst denying it to our nationals.

It did not start with Trinidad and Tobago. I remember when our fishermen used to go into Suriname and Guyana for shrimp. I do not know how many people know this but we are still getting some of the benefit of the shrimping and fishing industry in Guyana because Barbados businesses now own a percentage of the fishing factories in Guyana. That is one way of going about the matter, Sir.

Sir, we must also, within the Single Market and Economy, try to get that issue on the front burner. I would

not wish anything that we say... not that we should be frightened to talk to the Trinidadian Government but I think it calls for the highest diplomacy and imagination in getting back on track the relationship that is so vital to the future of the Caribbean nations.

Whilst I am on fishing, I was pleased to hear the Minister of Education speak about the programmes at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic where she has seen an increase in the number of courses offered in naval architecture, marine engineering, boat building and electronics.

Sir, I want to end my speech on this brief note. The World News carried a report about a Japanese fishing boat which was sunk as a result of a manoeuvre by an American submarine surfacing in the wrong way. Who were those people on board that boat? They were young men doing a degree that involved marine sciences and fishing. There is no reason why marine science and fisheries should not be a main course at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic. I have spoken to both Ministers about this before. We must not believe that our fishermen are people who a former Right Excellent Member of this House used to call people in cork hats. Some of the best graduates should come out of our tertiary institutions seeing the fishing industry as a future, up to the stage of canning, and stop the Japanese from raping the Caribbean for a few cents. Unfortunately some of the people in the Caribbean accept a couple of gifts from the Japanese and believe that is okay.

I have always carried on against the Japanese. If we are going to slap the Trinidadians, we cannot do so without slapping the Japanese. The Japanese are the biggest predators that we have in the Caribbean waters and what do they offer us? They sell us their reconditioned vehicles and the terms of trade between ourselves and them are worse than the terms of trade between ourselves and our Caribbean neighbours.

We have to see these matters in the right way and use the right diplomacy in the right manner to find the right solutions for the Caribbean people.

Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would like to start where I finished a moment ago dealing with the fishing industry of Barbados. I also want to draw to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Finance who is also responsible for defence and security that the fishing industry, as it stands now, is not the same fishing industry we knew years ago. The lives of fishermen are being threatened every day, especially those fishermen who fish on the ice boats.

I am making a call for the Caribbean Governments to recognize that the Regional Security System must be used to protect the fishermen of the Caribbean. Mr. Chairman, it is not fair for fishermen to leave these shores to go fishing and do an honest day's work, only to be confronted by thugs and criminals to bring illegal substances into the Caribbean territories.

I am saying that the Regional Security System must be properly used. I am also calling on the United States Government to acknowledge that they must have an influence on what is happening within the Caribbean. It is not good enough to give equipment to the Caribbean leaders. They must also use their authority to make sure that the fisherfolk are able to work on the high seas without interference.

I am hearing too many stories and the evidence is now clear that it is not easy to go out to sea in an ice boat and come back to Barbados unless somebody feels that a package must be delivered on their behalf. If you do not deliver that package, they want to sink your boat.

Sir, I feel that Caribbean Governments must recognize that there are duty bound to protect the lives of all workers. I am saying that fishermen are important people too, that the Regional Security System, whether it is the boats or planes, must be used to protect the livelihood of the fisherfolk. I hope that I will not have to repeat this particular statement. Sir, the same way I know it, I am saying the politicians with authority would have to know what is happening.

I am also calling on the police force to recognize that there are some culprits who deliberately get involved in the systems but there are also some honest fishermen who, because they want to protect their lives, sometimes deliver a package or two. Sir, this is where we have to be very careful with how we deal with certain cases.

We also have to be very careful in information gathering because the fishermen must believe that when things like these occur that they can pass the necessary information on and that their lives will not be threatened. Sir, enough on that particular matter. I am also saying that Barbadians and other Caribbean people must recognize that, in the same way we recognize that oil is an important resource, fish must be regarded as a resource too.

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Mr. D.St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, it is only for us to get up in Parliament and say that Trinidad should allow our boats to come into their waters; but Trinidad will also have to protect their territorial waters and that there will be a

cost. If we allow fishing boats to just fish in the waters like that, Trinidad will be putting its territorial waters at high risk and anything can happen within those territorial waters. I am calling on the Government to recognize that there is going to be a cost for Barbadian fishermen to fish in the Trinidadian waters and it is also in our interest to pay that cost. The reason being that we would have to ask the coast guard of Trinidad to give some type of protection to our fishing boats.

Sir, this myth that we can just send boats into other peoples' territorial waters must be seen for what it is. There must be a regional agreement where the various territories come together and recognize that they have to work hand in hand and the fishing industry must truly be seen as an industry and not somewhere where you can send fishing boats here, there and everywhere. Sir, if we do that we would then recognize that we will be going in the right direction and we will also be providing security for the fisherfolk.

Sir, I want the Minister of Agriculture to recognize that we are faced with a problem where there is a great demand for land at the sea coast.

Asides.

Mr. D.St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, we have to make sure that we do not decrease the land space allocated for building and hauling up boats. Anyone who lives on the west coast will recognize that the demand for that space is becoming greater and we are soon going to be in a situation where fishing boats will find themselves in the same position as the ice boats. In other words, some boats will be hauled up on the beach and other boats will have to remain at the mooring until the ones on the beach are ready to go back into the sea.

I am saying to the Minister of Agriculture that if we are to maximise the profits from fishing we cannot afford to allow this to happen. We have to recognize that, in the same way that tourism is important, fishing is also important. I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will not be influenced by some of his comrades who see a hotel as important and a fishing boat is unimportant.

Sir, we also have another scenario where there are some pleasure boats that throw their garbage out to sea without recognising that it is interfering with the seabed and the growth of fish. We need to correct that particular problem because those guys cannot continue to hamper the livelihood of fishermen.

I also want to find out from the Minister of Agriculture what is happening with sea eggs. Sir, to the north of Barbados, everybody knows that the stock has been replenished and we have to ask ourselves...

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: We need to find out what we are going to do. The same way that the Japanese can come and rape our seabeds, we have to be worried if there are not other people recognising that we have sea eggs near our shores, that they will come and reap our sea eggs and then re-export those same sea eggs to Barbadians. We have to be very careful, Sir. That is why I find it extremely difficult to understand why we cannot recognize the importance of our fisher folk of Barbados and can only see certain investors as important and do not recognize that fishermen and boat owners are also important.

Sir, I agree with the Honourable Member for Christ Church West that we have to recognize that, in terms of cost, it might be cheaper for us to enter joint arrangements with those who live in Tobago. Anybody who understands the fishing industry can tell you that the minimum cost of a two-week trip for an ice boat can be more than \$1 500. It is very important for that ice boat to be able to go any area of the sea where they can get a good catch.

There was a recent situation where some friends of mine were out to sea and they could not come ashore because the catch was so poor.

Asides.

Mr. D.St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, let me explain it to you. If a trip is expected to last for two weeks, the fishermen could not come ashore at the end of the two-week period because, if they had come ashore at that time, they would have made a loss on the trip. They had to extend the trip in order to be able to come ashore. *Asides*

Mr. D.St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, we have to understand that boat owners and fishermen...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, please. Give the Honourable Member time to concentrate.

Asides.

Mr. D.St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, we need to make sure that when you have a situation where the fishermen have to spend more time out to sea than expected, they are also faced with a scenario when they come ashore where they have to stay two additional weeks on land before going back out to sea because they cannot get ice.

Mr. Chairman, I do not understand why the fishermen in the north have to leave the north to go to the Bridgetown Complex to get ice. We have ice boats in the north and ice machines should also be located in the north of the island. I am calling on the Minister of Agriculture to recognize that the north of Barbados is important, and if

you start wrong you will end wrong. If you do not put an ice machine in the north, the fishing industry will not grow the way it should grow.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. First of all let me thank all of those who have made contributions so far for the way they ...

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Let me thank those who have made contributions today for the confidence they have reposed in the Ministry of Agriculture and what they have said about the future of Agriculture and the importance of Agricultural sector continued development of this country.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: Let me respond quickly to some of the concerns raised. The first one is in respect of the status of the Consett Bay project and this came from the Honourable Member for St. John. The project at Consett Bay has been completed. Anything that is to be done will just be minor work but the main construction activity at Consett Bay is finished. In the very near future, I will be inviting the Honourable Member for St. John to an opening ceremony for that facility in the same way that I will be doing for Skeete's Bay.

Those who spoke to the problems resulting from the ice, I would want to respond in this way: that this issue is well known and it is being addressed feverishly. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East made mention of the fact that a private sector team was looking to establish an ice manufacturing plant in Oistins. It has gotten the full support of the Minister and Ministry of Agriculture. It was my wish to have this manufacturing plant up and running at the beginning of the fishing season but certain things have prevented that from materialising and we sincerely hope that in the near future that plant could get going.

Only Monday afternoon, I left this Honourable Chamber and I visited a site in Cavans Lane where a barge is berthed and that has written on it, "Ice Manufacturing Plant." The barge is destined for Grenada. The owner of the barge is looking to have that barge taken down to Grenada and ice dispensed from it to support the Grenadian fishing industry.

Now that is a project which he has discussed with the Grenadians. The project is being held up because he is awaiting final word from the Grenadian authorities for that

barge to go down to Grenada. In the meantime, he has offered to provide ice for the local fishermen in order to deal with the long delays mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. I think it is a wonderful idea but before the dispensing of ice gets started, we will have to engage in discussions with Customs and the Harbour Master. The Minister of Agriculture cannot give permission for the barge to be located at a particular point but we are all in favour of it. We think that once the quality of the ice and whatever standard of specifications required are met, then the Ministry of Agriculture, advised through its Fisheries Division, would have no problem whatsoever in allowing ice to be dispensed from that barge to deal with the problems mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

In respect of the fishing shed at Martins Bay, I would just like to inform the Honourable Member for St. John that they should be getting some action in that area on the fishing shed in the near future. Notwithstanding the small number of fishermen who ply their trade in that area, we think that fishing sheds, like other marketing facilities, should be upgraded. Very soon we should be turning our attention to the fishing shed over there. We are aiming to provide bathroom facilities as well to the folks at Martins Bay.

Mr. Chairman, let me turn to this discussion on the sugar industry and I want to thank all those who have spoken so far for their support of the sugar industry. I treated this House in August last year to a full scale debate on the sugar industry and, at the time, I mentioned the important role that the sugar industry plays in respect of the generation of foreign exchange.

I also mentioned the importance in respect of employment generation or employment maintenance when I said that about three to four thousand people are employed in the sugar industry. I also said that the sugar industry is very important to this country from an ecological view point, in terms of helping to protect the soils from erosion and degradation. Further, and the point was made by the Honourable Member for St. John and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the greenery of the sugar cane fields is an added attraction for tourism.

A proclaimed benefit of the sugar industry is that a large proportion of the export earnings is retained in Barbados. As a result, the local multiplying effect of the sugar industry is fairly significant. On that occasion, I made mention of the fact - and I did it earlier today - that certain developments in the European Union are continuing to make it unprofitable for the sugar industry. At that time we made mention of the fact that, because the payment for the sugar we export to the European Union is done in Euros and we have a fixed price, and because of the continuing deterioration of the Euro against the US dollar, our returns

for the sugar which is exported to the European Union under the sugar protocol continue to decline.

I also said that the European Union, in its attempt to meet WTO commitments... that the price we get for the sugar that is exported to the European Union will decline on average by 2 per cent to 3 per cent per year for the next five or so years. When we combine those two factors it then becomes obvious that the revenues from sugar will continue to slide, unless there is a reversal in the movement of the Euro relative to the US dollar in particular.

Mr. Chairman, on that occasion, I alluded to the fact that a Sugar Task Force was established and that the Task Force's Report would have been submitted in the not-too-distant future. Sir, the Task Force's Report is in. The recommendations of the Task Force are very clear. They speak to measures that will have to be taken, and taken quite quickly, if we are to improve the cost conditions in the industry and if we are to improve the efficiency in the industry.

They also spoke to what is needed to be done at the level of the field and certainly what we have to do at the level of the factory. For us to maintain our involvement in the sugar industry, the cost of producing sugar in Barbados must come down and it must come down fairly quickly and what this requires, Mr. Chairman, is a change in the approach to doing business in the sugar industry. Mr. Chairman, we at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are very keen to see the Government taking a definitive position on the sugar industry.

The Report is with the Ministry of Finance's officials for their comments. Naturally, they will have to give it careful study and on Friday morning the Ministry of Agriculture's officials and the Ministry of Finance's officials should be meeting to have an important decision on the recommendations of the Task Force's Report so that we can take the process forward.

I am not at liberty at this time to give the details of the Task Force's Report because the Cabinet has not had discussion on the Report as yet. But, suffice it to say, Mr. Chairman, one thing that we are certain about - and this point was alluded to by many of the speakers - is that something must be done in respect of the factory options. We know that, for Barbados to increase its competitiveness in the area of sugar production, one of the things that we can no longer do is to accept, notwithstanding what are the reasons advanced and who might be advancing these reasons, we cannot continue with a three-factory option for much longer.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: The factories are outdated and are too costly to maintain. There are too many breakdowns and the lost time for the factories is too significant so we must make a move very soon to make a determination about the three-factory option.

One of the other things we can safely say at this point in time is that we cannot go forward with a modernized sugar industry with old plants and equipment. I do not have to say anything more at this time because if you are modernizing and you want to improve things at the field and you seek to improve things at the level of the factory, then there are certain conditions which must be created to achieve success in those areas. I do not have to say anything more about that at this stage - only to say that it is the intention of this administration to keep the sugar industry going by understanding that it will be necessary to have significant overhaul of the methods and ways of doing businesses in the sugar industry.

Mr. Chairman, just let me get back to the Ministry's programme by moving on to the area of research. We, at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development recognised that, in order for us to reposition agriculture so that it could be maintained as a viable commercial alternative, the research work at the Ministry must become more focussed. We have taken a decision that there should be a renewed thrust in the area of research. One of the things that we will have to do is to rationalize the work that is undertaken at the agricultural stations. Up to this time we have a situation where some of the funds which are allocated to the agricultural stations are used to support the Ministry's commercial thrust. The remaining funds are used for the research thrust.

Mr. Chairman, there is no reason in this day and age when we need a more focussed Ministry of Agriculture that the Ministry should be competing with the private farmers whom we are encouraging to get more and more involved in agriculture. We are saying that we need to cease the commercial operations at the Ministry and focus our attention on research.

In respect of the Codrington Agricultural Station, because of the problems posed for the water quality in that area as a result of the release of the nitrates - which happens because of the use of herbicides and pesticides out there - we need to cease the operation there but we need to take that decision in its wider context. The wider context is that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has to get back to first principles and focus more on research. The funds which are made available for this particular sub-programme should be spent on research. We have identified a number of crops which we think the research focus of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should be on and we intend to press on with

this work. The crops being targeted are sweet potatoes; hot peppers; onions; tomatoes; herbs and spices.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would like to inform you that you have got one minute.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, our renewed interest in research will require us to collaborate more and to get more synergy out of our relationship with the research and development institutions that we subscribe to, in particular, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Inter-American Institute for Corporation on Agriculture, the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Chairman, just before I close, I think I should mention another component of the rationalization programme because the Home Agricultural Station in St. Philip is where some commercial activity takes place. We need to be honest at the Ministry and I need to be honest with myself. If we are moving to de-emphasize the commercial operations as they relate to crop production, then we will have to take a decision on that activity at the Home Agricultural Station as well. We need to be consistent.

The tissue culture work will continue there and the lands which will be released by us by taking a decision to come out of crop production at the Home Agricultural Station will be used for horticulture and that activity would compliment the tissue culture work that is being done there.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, before the Minister sits, can the Minister tell us what the Ministry is doing about the problem affecting the cherry trees in Barbados? Cherry trees have been affected for several months now, it must be almost a year. If he cannot answer it now, I would like him to do so later on when it is more convenient. It just occurred to me and I would be grateful if he can tell us something about it.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: He was talking about research. This is an area that the Ministry should be out by all of us who have cherry trees to help us with them.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Something is wrong with them that they are not bearing.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You still have 30 seconds.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I just want to say at this point that, notwithstanding a decision that we have taken internally - of course, it has to be discussed elsewhere - which would result in the cessation of the work at some of the agricultural stations, no worker at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will be displaced. We have made plans for the internal redeployment of those workers and we, as a responsible Cabinet, will also accept to take another decision to have those workers who, all like now, work at the Codrington Agricultural Station transferred to the Ministry of the Environment to work on the botanical garden which is proposed for that area. We have fruits trees up there which are to be maintained and some of those workers with their expertise in the maintenance of those fruit trees will remain at that location.

There will be internal redeployment as part of the rationalization programme to have some of the workers come to the Central Agricultural Research Station at Headquarters and others will join the market staff for employment at the Consett Bay and the Skeete's Bay Projects. So no worker at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been earmarked for displacement. All of them will be absorbed elsewhere in the Ministry.

Mr. D. T. GILL: Mr. Chairman, I rise to lend my support to Head 25 and I would like to preface my speech by saying that no longer can we debate or discuss agriculture in a sealed environment.

Sir, one has to see how agriculture either relates to or is related to other disciplines, ministries, departments - or whatever we care to call them, whether it be the environment, health, land or whatever - and the economy in its wider sense.

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Mr. D. T. GILL: Not so long ago a boat owner approached me and asked me if I could source a form of arsenic for him. I jumped back. I asked, "What is the reason?" He must have read somewhere about arsenic. If you check the labels of your paint, you would see that derivatives of arsenic are used as excellent anti-fungal agents. I know Bajans. They would think that a quarter pound of arsenic would kill off all of the fungal attachments on the boat. I think they call them chiropedes. They just attach themselves onto the boat. Knowing Bajans, they would use as much as humanly possible. But you would have to think, 'Now, how would that interfere with marine life?' I told him the best thing to do is to take that boat out for a few weeks. Let the natural sea sprays and sunlight do what they have to do and then do the regular painting.

Sir, agriculture today has to do with new technologies, as the representative for St. Michael East said. It has to do with modern weather forecasting. It has to do with pest controls. It has, Sir, to do with tissue culture. It has to do with reproducing resistant strains and species. Sir, it also has to do with supporting your entomological studies, palaeological studies and your pathological studies. If we do not have these things right, Sir, it is an end to the agriculture, marine culture or whatever you may call it. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West has reminded me, before I get there, about genetic modification.

Sir, I am not even going that far. I am going for the basic things. If we check out the amount of money - and I will speak to that at another time - being spent in the European Union, they do not call it a subsidy. It is a channel for research and development which will cut down your subsidies by about 90 per cent. But they have gone around that in a clever way. I will speak to that, Sir, when the other Bill comes here in a few weeks time.

Sir, if we look at the recent fish kills about two years, it would show you how vulnerable our marine life can be within this area. If you look at the pink hibiscus mealy bug, this can also show you how fast this disease, whether it is airborne or otherwise, moves through the region. In relation to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, Sir, in recent times the citrus fruits such as the lime trees, you will see that the leaves are beginning to shrivel and one may believe in his question about the cherry tree that it is a water deficiency or that the leaf has taken a natural slide. One may believe that it is probably due to a period devoid of rain and that the leaf has shrivelled and is dropping off at an early stage. Sir, that new surge in disease has been called the leaf miner disease where, Sir, the leaf actually goes into a different form. The young fruit falls off and it causes sheer havoc.

Sir, there is another problem that we have not even gotten over.

Asides.

Mr. D. GILL: Leader, do not heckle me. Do not do that to me, Leader. You are setting a bad example, Sir.

Regarding the paw--paw, Sir, up to now we have not gotten over the problem of the paw--paw. There are some problems there, Sir, and I think the Israelis have been able to bring it up to a certain level by experimenting.

But the taste of that paw--paw is not the distinct Bajan taste. It has a cosmetic taste. It has a sweetie-sweetie taste. Barbadians are just not accustomed to it. Years ago - and this is how off-the-cuff Bajans spray - I think it was Codrington where an acreage of paw--paw had been planted for export. But a farmer or somebody got their

hands on a chemical they call among them 2-4-D, sprayed it and it wiped out all of the crop.

Sir, as I said earlier, we must take note of research and development and approach this problem of agriculture in a scientific manner. The whole world is sitting up, listening and watching about the hoof and mouth disease.

Sir, it is causing Britain severe economic pain. It is called interchangeably hoof and mouth or foot and mouth. It is causing problems in the Scandinavian countries and the news this morning told me that down in the Pacific and in New Zealand they are banning any meat products coming in from Europe. Just before Britain could get out BES disease, the mad cow disease. In human beings, Sir, it is not referred to as the mad cow disease. It is called after two researchers who identified the state of dementia; that if you ingest animals who suffer from that disease, it will result in human beings suffering from dementia. They make that foot and mouth disease look like a Sunday School party.

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Mr. D. T. GILL: We must, if we are to stay on top of our agriculture, make sure that certain practices are maintained. Just as we got in here yesterday and talked about AIDS and retroviruses, the lower classes of animals have their problems and that class of disease to which I just referred, Sir, is referred to as prionic diseases. Sir, all of that is research and development. Whether it affects bovine, carpine or porcine, these diseases must be seriously monitored. If they ever get aside into our livestock population it is "good night, nurse". I do not know if we can ever get back from whence we came.

Sir, there are certain safety measures and one may feel that because you are a farmer you must not practise certain health measures and hygiene. Just as how you should not go from a geriatric ward at the hospital to a paediatric ward without taking certain precautions, you should not go from one farm to another farm without taking certain precautions. It is a fact.

Sir, when it comes to the weather, we have no control of that. The winds can blow the spores wherever they care and, similarly, health care people should not go home without washing their hands and without taking off the basic garments. Neither should farming communities or farmers go home without doing the basic hygienic things.

Sir, there is also in agriculture, abuse of the herbicides and the pesticides and above all, antibiotics. There are lots of our children today who have to be maintained on antibiotics because of allergies. Not in your

day, in your day very few children had to be maintained on antibiotics. They were stronger. We have farmers who, without the correct guidance from veterinary officers or officers so trained, get their hands on antibiotics and feed them to the animals, not considering how soon they are going to go to market, whether they are lactating or otherwise. Once you get a fat soluble or a milk sequestering substance into the lower animal population, it can find itself right through the food chain and that adds to the problem when it comes to treating human beings.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I think at this point that you should wind up.

Mr. D. T. GILL: I am going to wind up, Sir. I could come back later if you want me to.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Fifteen minutes is allotted to you and I think you have fought fifteen minutes so you can come back later. I enjoyed those words. I never heard them before.

Mr. D. T. GILL: Sir, speaking to the economists, they must be wary of WTO and all the implications on how we are going to liberalize trade. Our agricultural officers and health officers and the department must be a lot more wary over from where we import, whether it is canned or live, whether it be plant or animal. There are a lot of people who think that they can get off when it comes to the phyto or to the plants we receive.

I reserve my rights to speak. Thank you.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, let me begin by adding my words of commendation to the Minister and to the Ministry for what I consider to be a very well articulated programme of the work of the Ministry of Agriculture and where they are going in the next fiscal year. Let me also say that it must be somewhat of a challenge for the Minister and the Ministry to operate in an environment as volatile and as uncertain as this environment is in relation to where we go with agriculture in the prevailing regional and international climate.

Sir, let me say that, even though I commended the Minister, the issues of national agricultural development cannot be discussed in this environment without some relation and some basis as to how it will affect tourism and tourism development in our country. It is important, Sir, that we focus on a number of key issues that will determine how and where we go with agriculture in Barbados and how it relates directly to the development of our tourism industry.

The history of the two industries and the evolution of the tourism industry is very much linked to the evolution or the development of the agricultural industry. I believe, Sir,

the one thing that I must endorse in the Minister of Agriculture's last intervention on the issue of the research work of the Ministry is that it needs to be much more focussed and much more targeted. Some very serious issues emerged particularly some social issues in agriculture, how they relate to our economic development and, particularly, how they relate to tourism. Sir, the issue of how we utilize lands in Barbados and particularly the rural areas of Barbados, land designated for agriculture as opposed to how we use and designate it for, possibly, tourism purposes. This is a debate that has been raging nationally for some time and there needs to be a definitive statement on where we are going with the use of our land for agricultural purposes vis-à-vis how we use that land for tourism and other development.

The argument must be powerful and persuasive but it almost must be accompanied by the proper empirical evidence of where we need to go. That is both an issue on the social side and on the economic side. Let me say that I come from a family where my grandmother is from Orange Hill in St. James and she was an agricultural labourer on the Westmoreland plantation, the same land that has now been converted into a golf course, and the issue is this. If I were a golf caddy on that same lot now, would I have moved up the ladder in terms of social mobility?

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Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Would I have moved up the ladder by plying my trade now as a caddy on that piece of land as opposed to where she would have been in terms of being an agricultural labourer?

Sir, there are two issues involved: the issue of economic benefit that it brings to the country and the issue of the social implication of having a golf course where agricultural land used to be.

I know there are a number of environmental concern as well but we need to be very clear about the direction of the agricultural industry as it relates to tourism. Sir, as far as I am concerned the issues are: looking outwardly at the global economy, seeing what that global economy is serving up, seeing how we can best position ourselves to take the best advantage of what the global economy is telling us and where we need to position each one of these industries vis-a-vis the other.

Sir, I have heard the Minister of Finance and Right Honourable Member for St. Peter state already that those who would like to write the history of Barbados and hang it on agricultural development in the future would be writing the economic history of Barbados as a 'eulogy in a country church-yard'.

Mr. Chairman, this is not to say that agriculture is not important because we do need the agricultural sector. But the issue is that we need to determine specifically how we utilise this land for agriculture, where we go with national development and how tourism fits in and, most of all, how the two complement each other.

It has already been determined, and the Minister has outlined it very clearly, that agriculture and sugar both have a future in Barbados. We have determined that tourism development will continue to be our number one industry and our number one foreign exchange earner and we have to find a way for the two industries to co-exist in harmony and be mutually beneficial.

Sir, we spend a lot of time dealing with linkages to the tourism sector. The major tenets of tourism development are marketing, human resource development, institutional development and product development but a lot of times we ignore linkages in terms of manufacturing, agriculture and culture, how they complement the tourism industry and how we can, in essence, get more out of these industries for tourism development. The one that I think we neglect the most is the issue of agriculture and how agriculture can complement the tourism industry.

Sir, I am saying that the future of our agricultural industry is bound up in its relation to the development of tourism in Barbados. There are many jurisdictions in the Caribbean which have tourism as their number one foreign exchange earner or number one productive sector and they have jettisoned agriculture from their shores forever. There are places like Bermuda, Antigua and the Bahamas to a certain extent where agriculture does not exist.

Sir, there are many reasons why we need to hold on to agriculture, both for economic reasons and for cultural and social reasons, as well as for ecological reasons but it will not exist unless we are able to, somehow or other, link it to the development of tourism and create a climate in which they complement each other and in which they are mutually beneficial.

Sir, the best economic use of our land is one of the issues that we need to deal with, in terms of whether or not we use it for agriculture as opposed to tourism. We need to be able to create within tourism what is the best economic use of our land. The man who comes here, pushes down three houses in Sandy Lane, builds a villa on the beach, then comes here for three months every year and does not live here for the remainder of the year but employs two maids, has three dogs and a cat, that man contributes very little to the industry.

If we had been able to utilise that same plot of land for tourism development to build a hotel, the spinoffs that we would have received from that particular plot of land

would benefit Barbados a lot more. Even when we designate a piece of land for tourism development, what types of tourism development are we getting? Is it the type of tourism development that redounds to the benefit of Barbadians?

On the issue of how we deal with agriculture vis-a-vis tourism, we need to make some definitive statements that are powerful and persuasive to the people of Barbados. They must be accompanied with empirical knowledge and substance so that we can move forward.

Sir, the basis reference for development is sustainability in the sense of sustaining the environment because there are other ways in which Barbados is in the process of creating a sustainable tourism industry. The major concern is not only to make tourism activity compatible with the natural environment as it relates to the use of land but to ensure that it also enhances the development of that particular piece of land.

Mr. Chairman, experiences from around the world and mostly from this region have taught us a number of things about rural tourism development. We need to be able to improve the rural areas of Barbados so that they remain attractive for the rural population and visitors alike. Sir, this is important as we seek to move our tourism inland.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, the subject matter is agriculture. I hope you can connect it because I am hearing more about tourism than agriculture.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, there is a nexus. Sir, when we refer to the linkage strategy, I believe that what is important is how we create the best environment for the supply of agricultural products and services to the tourism industry. What are the linkages of agriculture to tourism and how do we achieve them? For a long time we have been discussing the issue of how we create a better climate for the supply of agriculture produce in Barbados to the hospitality sector in terms of quantity, quality and timing of supplies to the tourism industry. Sir, Barbados has been having no end of problems in terms of creating the right environment and understanding how best we can supply agricultural products to the tourism industry.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would like to advise that you have two more minutes to conclude.

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HON. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, the issue of the supply of agricultural produce to the tourism sector is something of deep concern to the sector. It is something that we have debated for a long time but the issue of how we get it done,

the correct quantities, quality and the timing of the supplies to the tourism sector are something that we still have not sorted out.

The Ministry of Agriculture is in the process of a study to deal with the issue but the issue, Sir, is one that needs to be put on the front burner because it will determine in all contexts the future of the agriculture industry, vis a vis the future of our tourism industry.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a short intervention on this topic of agriculture.

I realised that quite a few of our Members have been saying that sugar has a future in Barbados and that we should still continue to give it our support. Some of us seemed to be marvelling at the state of sugar as it stands today. Some of us seemed very surprised at what has happened to sugar and some of us are now being awakened to what is happening to sugar. I believe that a lot of the practices of the past are now coming home to haunt us. A lot of the things which went on in sugar production years ago, we are now feeling the effect of those practices.

I had a discussion about 10 years ago with an old agriculturalist in my area, a chap by the name of Lisle Clarke and he is in his 90s now. He was trying to point out to me exactly what the real problems with sugar are. One of first points he made was the problem of management. He has always been saying that the managers in sugar never had any true training in plantation management and that it was a family thing.

Indeed, what he was saying was that no matter how irresponsible the manager's son was, he later became the manager and he said that had a devastating effect on quite a few plantations that he worked on. Some of their sons, he said, did not have a clue as to what was going on. One of the first things he said was that there was inefficiency in management. Management in many cases on those plantations was extremely poor.

Another point he made, Sir, was that no research was ever done in terms of things like fertilizers and so on; no research was done on the impact of equipment on the soil and no research was done on the variety of canes and so forth. Therefore, all of this meant that the industry suffered.

The Ministry of Agriculture never thought that it was their duty to offer assistance in management to those persons on the plantation. In fact, I believe, the Ministry has always been treating them as very special persons. Indeed, what we also found happening was that when an overture was made to them, that when we would do some training, the message seemed to be coming from them that

'We are businessmen and we know'. Therefore, there was some kind of resentment to that training even if the Ministry of Agriculture offered it.

I do not know if today there is still that gap, which he spoke about some 10 years ago, still existing between the Ministry of Agriculture and the sugar estates. Sir, what the sugar industry needs is really technical input if it is to improve its operations.

One of the things that he pointed out was the fact that the Extension Officers of the Ministry of Agriculture would go on a plantation and they would find that onions and yams are also planted on these estates. They would give advice with respect to the yams and onions but no advice was offered with respect to the canes. On the same plantation where these various crops are planted, attention is given to some crops and not to others. No attention was paid to the sugar canes.

Sir, this gentleman had always been calling for an agronomist at the Ministry of Agriculture that would specifically look at sugar. I do not know if there is an agronomist that is specifically earmarked for dealing with sugar. This gentleman is ninety years old and if you hear him speak about the sugar industry you will agree that he knows what he is talking about. Sir, to me he is the expert on sugar and is the person that I would go to when these matters arise.

Sir, he has always been saying that where the management is good, the yield is usually high. Sir, he has named the plantations but I would not disclose them here.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Sir, these are the ones that he said followed the rules.

Mr. Chairman, he pointed out that for instance there are some plantations that currently have a ninth and a tenth crop but in his time it did not go as far as that. It went only to a fourth or fifth crop. The problem today, Sir, is that these plantation owners want to get away from the expense of ploughing and so on but what happens is that the yield turns out to be very poor.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps, one of the biggest problems that sugar has had is the stigma attached to sugar. The whole question of sugar and slavery; the connection between that crop and what our foreparents had to go through is there and it will always be there. Also, people regarded you when you were working in the sugar industry as a nobody and it was the last thing in the world that you wanted your children to do.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, this is why, to a large extent, we have had to turn to the technology to reap the canes. I have been reliably informed that where the machines are concerned, the machines cut the canes high up as opposed to when the cane cutters used to chop them down to the ground. As a result of this you do not get good shoots from the canes.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Sir, if you hear this old chap talk about the sugar industry you will gain a great deal of knowledge from him.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Sir, we also have to think about the cost of production of sugar as well. I think that there must be a conscious effort on the part of the people in the industry. I do not think that it should happen by accident. Mr. Chairman, if you do not know your cost of production, you cannot plan properly and you will not know what your profit margin is. I think that is very crucial. I do not think that there are a lot of managers out there who can tell you what the true cost of production really is.

Sir, I believe that a simple thing like 10 extra bags of fertiliser, I believe, can make a tremendous difference to the yield and can actually impact on the cost of production.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to share those views with you and to let you know that as far I am concerned and was able to gather from someone who spent his entire life in the sugar industry, it would appear that quite a few of the problems are, indeed, of a managerial nature.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Chairman.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to use the time allotted to me for my final intervention for the evening to focus on three areas. The first one is the continuation of a point made by the Honourable Member for Philip North relating to the extension services. The second one speaks to one of the Government's initiatives, the landless programme and the third one, the Agricultural Development Trust (ADT) which is another major initiative of the Government to take the agricultural sector forward.

In respect of the crop extension services, Mr. Chairman, when I first went to the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development, I identified the extension services as one section of the Ministry that we really needed to focus on. I see any section that provides the bridge for the linkage between the Ministry and farming community as an important conduit. But we cannot discuss the extension services section and the worthiness of this section without at the same time linking it to the research work at the Ministry.

I said as much earlier as to indicate that we need to really trust the research at the Ministry and we need to concentrate the resources which are made available to the agricultural stations to the research but the research at the Ministry needs to be demand driven. We also need to generate output in the formation which could be used by the farming community to improve their farming activities.

The Extension Officer must be well versed in what the researchers at the Ministry are doing so as to best transfer that information which is generated by way of output from the research activity to the farming community. The Extension Officer must also be at the cutting edge of technological innovation in the agricultural sector so that when he speaks to the farmer, he is speaking from a position of authority. Mr. Chairman, I am not convinced that the Extension Officers at the Ministry of Agriculture are doing the best possible job.

I get complaints from my farmers - when I say farmers, I mean the farmers in my constituency - and would imagine the other Members of Parliament who represent rural constituencies will get complaints from their farmers as well. Sir, these complaints will speak to the attitude of the Extension Officers, the timeliness of their visits, the contribution they make when they do turn up at the farms and we need to speak to that.

One of the things that we will be putting particular emphasis on at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is to refashion the extension services section so that our Extension Officers are better trained, which would allow them to deliver a better service to the agricultural community. We also need to integrate the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with the Barbados Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation.

Sir, we have two tiers of Extension Officers, one at BADMC and one at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and I am saying that the time has long passed when that should stop. We need Extension Officers going to the farming community speaking the same language, so I intend to have a rationalization of the extension services in Barbados.

The extension services will assist in the training of farmers' organisations in operational and financial management but the Extension Officers could only do that if they themselves are well equipped with the requisite knowledge to transfer to the members of farmers' organisations. The section needs to focus on the training of farmers in pesticide usage, agronomic and irrigation practices for the improvement of soil fertility, water conservation and use, et cetera. Once again, Mr. Chairman, in order to be effective in this area, the Extension Officer must become a bit more sophisticated. He really must get at the cutting edge of agricultural technological innovation.

Mr. Chairman, the Extension Officer has a very important technical support role to play, in driving the Land for the Landless Programme and in supporting the activities of the Rural Development Commission in their efforts to promote agriculture as a profitable occupation.

The Rural Development Commission has a Rural Enterprise Fund and one aspect of the mandate of the Rural Development Commission is to facilitate farming activity in rural constituencies. However, the Commission is devoid of technical skills which would allow a proper tracking of funds which they make available to support agriculture-related projects in the rural constituencies.

Sir, they have to make use of Agricultural Officers and Extension Officers who are located elsewhere in the Ministry. We are saying that these Extension Officers should be made available to the Rural Development Commission to help them with the technical aspects of their work and this brings me to a discussion on the Land for The Landless Programme.

Honourable Members of this House will remember and I should remember because it was the first Throne Speech for me as an MP, and you will recall that the Governor-General in February of 1999 stated that the Government was desirous of implementing a Land for the Landless Programme. This initiative was engendered by the increasing demand by landless farmers for access to land to carry out agricultural activities. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Chairman, this, along with the Agriculture Development Trust (ADT) which I hope I will have a couple of minutes to speak about tonight, are two of the most important initiatives which the Ministry of Agriculture will be taking in my time at the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Honourable Prime Minister told us something a couple of days ago and he is correct, as simple as it may seem. He said that if you want an objective measure of the success of the Ministry of Agriculture, it is to look at the number of foreigners who we were able to bring into in this country and how many of those foreigners have been looking after productive and efficient operations.

Sir, the Land for the Landless Project gives us an opportunity to increase agricultural production in Barbados but we want to do it in an orderly and a structured manner and we want to make sure that productivity of those farmers is enhanced.

And what have we done in this Land for the Landless Project? The Cabinet agreed, Mr. Chairman, that the Barbados Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC) should be responsible for administering the programme, so BADMC is the executing agency. It is stated that the Corporation should establish a database of available land by encouraging landowners who have land to rent or lease or for sharecropping, as well as those landless farmers who are desirous of farming to register with its Agricultural Services section.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: What we are doing is creating a database. We want to have included in that database all of the land which at the current time is lying idle in Barbados because we need to bring it back into cultivation. So we are encouraging private landowners to make the land available to the Government for inclusion in the pool of lands for which the programme will be operationalized.

Mr. Chairman, we all recognized that private landowners appear to be sceptical in leasing or renting land to private individuals for farming. We are saying that the Government should enter into an arrangement with them through the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC) to have the lands leased to the Government and we in turn will then lease the land to the willing farmers.

The Government has made available four plantations, namely Bawdens, Sedge Pond, Haggatts and Greenland, for this Land for the Landless project. The BADMC has identified certain criteria which we would want to use to select the farmers for this programme. One of the things that we have been very careful to do is to make facilitation in these criteria for young persons to get involved in farming.

We have a situation where the Honourable Minister of Education Youth Affairs and Culture is correct in saying that the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic's curriculum is one which is characterized by an agricultural programme. The Chairman of the Board is a very successful agriculturalist in Barbados. We want to provide an opportunity for those students who take the agricultural science programme at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP) and those students who take the Associate Degree in Agriculture at the Barbados

Community College (BCC) who on leaving those institutions are keen to become practising farmers and we are encouraging them to get involved in this Land for the Landless project.

Mr. Chairman, a successful farming venture needs a lot more than just the availability of land. One of the things that we are going to be very careful in doing, and we have started it with the farmers from the St. Andrew Small Farmers Co-op who are already on some of this land, is to avoid the mistakes of the Spring Hall Land Lease Project. We will allocate plots of sizes which we think, in discussion with the farmers themselves, that they are able to farm productively and efficiently. We have to learn from our mistakes.

The persons who conceptualized the Spring Hall Land Lease Project, however well intentioned, have made a bad mistake in thinking that they could turn a backyard farmer into a large scale farmer by moving that individual from a small plot where they will normally do a bit of kitchen garden at home and let him loose on 20 acres of land - because they said that was the optimum lot size in Spring Hall - without at the same time teaching him the rudiments of proper farming and without at the same time giving him access to the financial system which would facilitate that farmer getting the right equipment for such large scale agricultural activity by our standards. So we would learn from that mistake.

We have the benefit of a small farmer co-op in St. Andrew which is playing a pivotal role in the operationalization of this programme in St. Andrew. So we will use this opportunity of the Land for the Landless Programme to strengthen the management capability of that Co-op in St. Andrew.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you have to wind up now. We have got 15 minutes to go before close of play.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I would like just to take a minute or two to make mention...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I believe you have all tomorrow to do that. I believe you can come back tomorrow. This forum is yours. You can come back tomorrow and continue so I am suggesting to you that you have one minute.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I just want to wind up on the land for the landless project.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Well, one minute to wind up.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I wish to say that the planning work for this project is at a very advanced stage. We have been able to establish a small plot for this unit. We have

three persons going to work now to drive this programme. The arrangements for the surveying work which is vital for a programme of this type have been made so that the surveying work can be done.

As I have said, we will be providing the farmers who will eventually get on to this land with a complete package of assistance which will allow the farming operations to be successful. Training will be a very important component of this programme. Strengthening the management capability of the Co-op in St. Andrew will also be a very important component. Pointing them in the right directions so that they can access valuable institutional finance will be an important component of this programme. Providing the right technical assistance will also be a vital component in this programme.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, through the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMC), are very mindful of this fact. We want to learn from the mistakes of the Spring Hall Land Lease Project. As I said earlier, the Land for the Landless project is one of the flagship projects of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the planning for it will be done very meticulously.

Mr. Chairman, I will stop at this point and come back tomorrow.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I welcome this opportunity to speak on this Head.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You have got 12 minutes.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am indeed happy for the 12 minutes that you will give me so I will come again tomorrow but I want to share some of my thoughts on this Head. I want first of all to congratulate the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for doing a wonderful job in moving this sector forward. I have seen the sugar industry becoming more stabilized and it has returned to its highest point in five years. It is now producing more than 58 000 tonnes of sugar and it is expected this year that this crop will surpass the 58 000 tonnes. I also noticed that in the non-sugar agriculture that that sector has also done well.

Mr. Chairman, there are some things which I want to look at. I was happy that the Honourable Minister has recognized the importance of the Extension Officers. I believe the Extension Officers have a role to play in a modern agricultural economy. Now, the Extension Officers not only advise the farmers but they help to guide them into modern techniques and ways of doing them. We have seen in past decades where Extension Officers were used to help promote agriculture, especially among small farmers.

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Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I believe that with the type of knowledge and technology that the Minister is putting behind the extension service this will be a step in the right direction.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the agricultural sector has more losses than any other sector. There are too many losses in agriculture and I want to look at some of these heavy losses in agriculture. For example, farmers in agriculture have losses due to the weather. Sometimes there is bad weather in terms of being dry. Sometimes it is the wet season and it really can wipe out a complete farm and they suffer from this sort of thing. There are also pests and diseases occurring from time to time within the farming community.

Sir, I believe the one of the most important losses that the farming community suffers today is praedial larceny. There are people who steal at night and sell in the day. I believe that this has caused many farmers not to plant up their ground. I have spoken to many farmers, Mr. Chairman, since I am from a farming community and they have said to me, 'Why bother?' There are many people who make a living from selling things that they do not produce. This happens not only in my community but throughout Barbados. Many people go to the stores, shops and markets and buy these fruits and vegetables and they do not know sometimes what they are buying and who produced them. I know that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said that he does not want to see a licensing system. But I believe that every farmer in Barbados should have a license.

Sir, the Extension Officer should know who are the people producing in this particular village. When they sell to the markets, you should know exactly who is selling to you. I believe that many farmers suffer heavy losses from praedial larceny. Livestock farmers lose their cows, sheep and goats and crop farmers also lose their crops.

Sir, look at the sugar industry. Do you know, Sir, how many large farmers lose their crops? Do you know also how many people grate canes and how many people have their machines within the urban areas and rural areas who make heavy gains off the farming community? I believe that the farming community suffers more losses than manufacturing, tourism and technology.

Sir, there is also competition from abroad. The competition that the farming community faces from other communities abroad is that people can produce at a lower cost. This is of concern to the farming community and we have to do something about it. I am not sure how we can

help, but I believe that the Ministry of Agriculture should be looking at ways how best the Ministry can help

the farming community.

Already Government has done a lot, Sir. Government has zero rated a number of the inputs that the community now gets. I am not sure what can be done but, Mr. Chairman, within agriculture, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip has said, it still seems that there is a stigma attached to agriculture. People do not want their children to work in agriculture. Hence, many persons starting from the 1940s and 1950s wanted their children to be educated, not to do farming or agriculture, but to be in white collar jobs. This has caused the industry to suffer this great set back.

Sir, the other thing is management to which the Minister of Labour has alluded. I also want to look at the question of how do we look at land for farming, housing and for other recreational facilities? There is a thin line between the land use for housing and land use for agriculture although the Government is committed to a strong agricultural policy. If we are supposed to have recreational facilities and housing, then we must look at this land use quite carefully.

Sir, I believe from the 58,000 tonnes of sugar that is being produced this year that we have enough land and the sugar industry should concentrate on the arable land and that marginal land should be taken out of agriculture for housing and other uses. We are committed to agriculture but we have to look at certain town centres that the Government is committed to. We are committed to town centres at Six Roads, Belleplaine, Glebe and other developed areas. When we bring that study, we will have to look at it very carefully because it is my view that there are still a number of farmers who are suffering because they have not gotten permission to develop their marginal land. We would like to see that marginal land, which we have spoken about, developed whether it is within the yard of the plantation or estate.

Sir, I am aware that there are a number of farmers who are forced to keep these marginal lands in agriculture even though they are making heavy losses. I want to encourage the study so that we will be able to concentrate heavily on those lands and the lands that are marginal should be taken out of agriculture, in a sensible and meaningful way, to encourage not only small people to own land in this country but also to give the industry more hope.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, it is now one minute to seven o'clock. We propose to finish at 7 o'clock, so that means you have one minute to wind up.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I would like to say in closing that I support all of the initiatives that the Ministry of Agriculture is doing. I look forward to coming in tomorrow and speaking on other aspects of this Ministry, especially the Rural Commission and the work that it is doing for the rural people and how rural industries are now beginning to see a future under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that you report progress to His Honour, the DEPUTY SPEAKER, and ask for leave to sit again.

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

7.00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

SUSPENSION

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until Thursday, March 15th at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

Lunch will be served from 12.30 p.m. tomorrow afternoon and we will resume at 2.00 p.m.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: I beg to second that.

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

7.02 p.m.

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SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR, Rt. Hon. O. S.**CLARKE, Hon. G. A.****EASTMOND, Hon. R. C.****FARLEY, Hon. R. R.****FORDE, Hon. Sir HENRY****GILL, Mr. D. T.****GREENIDGE, Hon. R. N.****KELLMAN, Mr. D. St.E.****LASHLEY, Hon. H. F.****LYNCH, Hon. N. A.****MARSHALL, Hon. R. D.****MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A.****SIMMONS, Hon. D. A. C.****THOMPSON, Miss H. E.****THOMPSON, Mr. D. J. H.****TOPPIN, Hon. R. St.C.****WOOD, Hon. A. P.**

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. Opening. The sitting resumes the second reading debate on the Estimates without an Order heading, and the source does not give the title of the Bill whose second reading the Prime Minister moved. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Take-slip about 12.25 p.m.. The take-slip reads ‘Tuesday, March 14, 2001’; the sitting was on Wednesday, March 14, 2001, as the other take-slips state. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Suspension, afternoon. The sitting was suspended ‘until 4.45 p.m.’, but the take-slip before the resumption reads ‘4.30 p.m.’. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Committee of Supply, Head 25, Hon. A. P. Wood’s final intervention. The Minister refers to ‘the Honourable Member for Philip North’, apparently St. Philip North. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 14th March, 2001, with the Deputy Speaker, His Honour J. M. Edghill, in the Chair, to continue the second reading debate on the Estimates. Hon. H. F. Lashley, Member for St. Michael South East and Minister of Social Transformation, supported the Estimates, speaking on poverty eradication and reading figures on cases of abandonment and abuse reported by quarter. He announced that the Welfare Department would become a Department of Family Services, that work on the Vauxhall Senior Citizens Village was to start, and that a National Advisory Council on Gender would be established. Hon. Sir Henry Forde recalled the 1994 slogan ‘Job No. 1 is Jobs’, said Barbados had had nine years of economic growth, and noted that the global economy had expanded by 4.7 per cent while the United States controlled 29 per cent of the world economy.

The Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, closed the debate, regretting that the budgetary exercise did not have at least two weeks of Parliament’s time and suggesting a revision of the Standing Orders. He praised

the Minister of Housing and Lands, which drew a light-hearted point of order from Hon. R. D. Marshall. He said there was no economic or social crisis, that low-income persons could get mortgages at 6 per cent against 9 per cent elsewhere, and that tenants could buy land at \$2.50 per square foot. He defended accountability of Government companies, the Barbados approach to VAT and tax reform, public sector reform through performance appraisal, and the Town and Country Planning Department, and he rejected a ‘one-stop shop’ for investors. He moved that the Bill be read a second time, Hon. D. A. C. Simmons seconded, and the question was agreed to without division.

The House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. Carter in the Chair, on Head 25, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (\$39 572 984). Hon. A. P. Wood, Member for St. Philip South, presented the Ministry’s programme, saying sugar output in 2000 rose by 9.7 per cent to 58 400 tonnes and non-sugar agriculture grew by an estimated 5.5 per cent. He described the temporary market accommodation at Cheapside, about 95 per cent complete, the Northern Fisheries project and rural markets at Oistins, the Glebe, Redmans Village and Speightstown. After a suspension, Mr. D. St.E. Kellman, Member for St. Lucy, said the agricultural stations were to be closed; Mr. Wood replied on a point of order that only the Codrington station had closed, because of water quality. Hon. R. C. Eastmond and Mr. D. J. H. Thompson followed, Mr. Thompson criticising the Chairman of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust over the subdivision of indebted plantations.

Mr. Kellman later said a rat problem was linked to IADB policy, and on Mr. Wood’s point of order the Chairman asked him to rephrase his statement. Hon. R. N. Greenidge praised the veterinary and quarantine officers for keeping out the pink mealy bug. Hon. R. R. Farley spoke on fisheries, and Miss H. E. Thompson asked for a clear Government statement on the future of sugar, noting St. Kitts’ decision to stop producing cane. Mr. Eastmond raised Trinidad and Tobago’s treatment of Barbadian fishermen and the trade balance in Trinidad’s favour. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley described agricultural training at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic. Progress was reported and the sitting suspended.

On resumption, Sir Henry Forde argued that there was a strong case for a single sugar factory, and Mr. Kellman returned to the fishing industry. Mr. Wood replied that the Consett Bay project was complete, that a private ice plant at Oistins had the Ministry’s support, that a decision on the three-factory option was needed, and that no worker would be displaced by the closure of stations; Mr. Simmons asked about diseased cherry trees. Mr. D. T. Gill, Hon. N. A. Lynch, on agriculture’s links with tourism,

Mr. Greenidge and Hon. G. A. Clarke also spoke, and Mr. Wood described the extension services and the Land for the Landless project. At 7.00 p.m. progress was reported, and

on the motion of Mr. Simmons, seconded by Hon. R. St.C. Toppin, the House was suspended until Thursday, March 15th at 2.00 p.m.