
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, July 30, 2002

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 30th July, 2002.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, G.C.M. B.A., Dip. Ed. (Speaker)

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY LL.B. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs) (Leader of the House)

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

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

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

Hon. 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)

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Minister of Labour and Social Security)

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

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Physical Development and the Environment)

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P. (Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, 23rd July, 2002.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, 23rd July, 2002, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

PAPERS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Value Added Tax (Refund) (The Barbados Legion of the British Commonwealth Ex-services League) Order, 2002.

2. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Port St. Charles Development Limited) (Exemption) Order, 2002.
3. Special Development Areas (Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation) Notice, 2002.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2002, be read a first time.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Constitution (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2002, be read a first time.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – TO MOVE THE SECOND READING OF THE CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2002

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is simply a formality to remove from the Order Paper, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2002. The Constitution (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2002 covers this but goes far beyond it as well. Therefore, I am simply asking that this Bill be removed from the Order Paper.

The question that the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2002, be removed from the Order Paper was put to the Honourable House and Mr. SPEAKER so ordered that it be removed.

ORDER NO. 4 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the Resolution which is before us, which asks this Honourable Chamber to take note of a Report from the Committee of National Reconciliation.

This Committee, under the Chairmanship of the Principal of the University of the Cave Hill Campus, Sir Keith Hunte, would have submitted its Report on December 18, 2002, and during the course of last year, notice of this Resolution was given.

The Committee, however, would have been established on the 28th July, 1999, in a ceremony at the Sherbourne Conference Centre. It comprised of a number of distinguished Barbadians from various sections of this community.

Sir, for the purpose of the record of this Chamber, I may start by reciting the members of that Committee for the sake of completeness: Sir Keith Hunte – Chairman;

Rt. Rev. & Hon. Rufus Brome, Deputy Chairman; Professor Kamau Brathwaite; Mr. David Comissiong; Mr. David Ellis; Mr. Allan Field; Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard; Ishi Kessaram; Shontelle Monroe-Knight; Reverend Jerry Seale; Senator LeRoy Trotman and Joy Workman.

Mr. Speaker, this Committee was established by this Government in the firm belief that, in the context of nation building, one must not only take care of one's material health but also the spiritual and psychological health of a nation. In that context, if one accepts that as a premise within the context of nation-building, then one has to deal fully and squarely with the issue of the sociological impact of our development.

At the inauguration of this Committee, the Prime Minister has quite clearly established his strong feelings as to why Barbados, at this juncture of its development, needed to confront the work of engaging with one another, irrespective of race, class or gender, so as to allow us to build a good and a just society and to do so with a greater level of social harmony.

Why would this, therefore, find itself as the subject of debate? Sir, all of us know the circumstances and the colonisation of this country in its modern incarnation. I say that because when I first started primary school, we were taught that Barbados was discovered in 1625, just as Christopher Columbus discovered the Caribbean.

More importantly is the point that there was a perception and a world view that discounted the presence of the indigenous people of the Americas. Sir, even during the course of the life of this Government, we have had to give expression to that life by reason of the settlements which have been found north of Almond Beach Hotel a number of years ago, reflecting on the presence of indigenous people almost 2000 years ago.

Fortunately for us, our children, not only in Barbados but throughout the Caribbean, are no longer led to believe the settlement of these countries during the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries, was the beginning of these countries' existence. In respect of our children today, there is a clear understanding that the region of the Americas would have seen the extinction of approximately 70 million indigenous people over a period of time, by reason of a colonisation process which took place, largely within the last 600 years of mankind's development. Mr. Speaker, it is, therefore, important to understand that to a large extent, the break which took place in terms of the people in Barbados with the settlement of the British, meant that the British were able to establish a society in whatever image they wanted to do and in circumstances we can record that it had at its core the concept of race.

11.25 a.m.

Indeed, scholars argued, across the world and the Caribbean, that in its modern settlement periods, societies were established purely on the precept of race and every aspect of that society was defined by its relation to that precept.

Sir, standards of excellence were defined in terms of race, people's ability to move, to have access to all kinds of rights: social, economic and political rights and basic human rights. All of that was defined on the precept of race.

I believe that one would ignore your history at your peril and to that extent we have sought to ensure that a clear and careful analysis of our historical experience is always brought to bear when seeking to understand the sociology of our development and understand how we move forward in terms of the psychological and spiritual welfare of our citizens.

Sir, this is nothing unique to this generation. Perhaps, what may be unique, is the extent to which we are prepared to discuss it, recognising that simply to hide it under a carpet will allow nothing to happen, except to the festering of bad feelings that exist among various groups within the society and in circumstances, where that festering may well lead to rancorous action on the part of individuals or groups within the society.

Sir, one of the things that we need to make absolutely clear is the experience of denial of access to justice and the experience of deprivation were not experiences of black people alone. While blacks, without doubt, suffered the largest part of that, there is, located within the unique history of Barbados, the plight of thousands of white indentured servants who in those days were sent to a plight which was supposed to be worse than hell, and referred to by them as 'Barbadoes'. Therefore, the existence of a class of white

people in Barbados who came here not as landowners or to benefit from the economic fruits of this island but who came here under the circumstances of forced labour. Not as extreme as that imposed on blacks, because they were still recognised by the law as individuals but their circumstances were nevertheless marred more by deprivation than by any preferential treatment in respect of their existence.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados has the twin experience of persons of different races locating their existence on this island by reason of circumstances of deprivation, while at the same time identifying a smaller group of people who would have benefitted from the exploitation of both blacks in the institution of slavery and whites in the institution of servitude in the form of indentured servants.

Sir, I think that these facts need to be made absolutely clear if we are better to understand the sociology of our development and also, if we are to lay a common platform for us to continue to move together as a nation united in a purpose and reflecting the kind of social harmony that engenders us to be at our best.

It is unfortunate that these facts have not always found themselves being made available to persons in the colloquial and formal expression of what transpired in our history. The reality is, we are awaiting better research and better prepared analyses and documentation of our historical experience than currently exist.

It is unfortunate that there is a paucity of published materials on the modern Barbadian historical experience. Therefore, I am happy that one of the last actions that I took in the Ministry of Culture, was to contract three persons to provide two volumes of a social history of Barbados, namely, Mr. Ronnie Hughes, Dr. Robert Morris, Barbados Workers' Union, and Ms. Cecilia Brathwaite, a historian of note herself. These three persons are currently engaged in the research that is necessary to appropriately and accurately document the Barbadian historical experience in terms of our social history. It is a thing which will benefit this society and more importantly the discussion of matters in relation to that historical experience, because too much is still cloudy and unknown. Indeed, if we understand how emotions are sparked on the basis of that, then we will better understand, Mr. Speaker, why it is imperative that we should have the best available research.

Mr. Speaker, when the World Conference on Racism was held last year in Durban, I regret, like many other countries, the outcome of that conference which could have had historic proportions in terms of the development of mankind but which came only to be remembered by the extent to which the West stood against the rest of the nations of the world, in respect of the intellectual dishonesty that they posited about the historical realities of our common past.

Sir, at the opening of that conference, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, said something that stuck with me. I regret that I was unable, ultimately, to attend the conference but he said that "Past wrongs must not distract us from present evils."

I believe that while we still have to acknowledge that there is much in our past that influences who we are today, that cannot be an excuse for us to fail to deal with the very fundamental aspects of our development, particularly where it relates to social injustice or poverty being present among us.

They are some who argue that the aspects of poverty that we have maybe systemic in nature. Mr. Speaker, I mean that the institutional development of Barbados had a bias in respect of who have been able to benefit from it. I believe that Barbados is fundamentally different from a number of other Caribbean countries and, indeed, a number of other colonial jurisdictions. We have come much further than most other countries in recognising that the history, which we had as the foundation of our modern development, required a fundamental commitment to the best traditions and precepts of a democratic Government and social justice. We have really come much further than most other countries in recognising that the history which we had as the foundation of our modern development required a fundamental commitment to the best traditions and precepts of democratic government and social justice.

11.35 a.m.

I am happy, Mr. Speaker, that I can stand today in a Parliament which has a history over the last seventy years of putting on the front burner those policies and programmes that were designed to engender greater social justice and a greater commitment to the building of participatory democracy in this country recognising that 300 years of a history of denying access to basic social, political, economic and human rights not only for the majority of the population, predominantly black, but also what came to be known as the poor-white class, the successors to the indentured servants. These persons have a certain dignity as individuals which requires of us as a government the reversal of the consequences that have been visited upon them by reason of the denial of access to basic certain human rights – political, social and economic rights.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the fact as recent as last week that Barbados can still stand in respect of the human development index as the most developed of the developing countries in the hemisphere, that 260 000 out of 800 million people in the hemisphere are counted as being the most developed, enjoying the best standard of living, is testimony to the sacrifice of those who were made to suffer but by reason of the commitment of those who understood that justice in this society could only be done by placing the very

precepts of a participatory democracy and the precepts of social justice at the centre of our development process.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a signal achievement for this country and irrespective of which political party or irrespective of which group of persons, because I talk not only of the Barbados Labour Party or the Democratic Labour Party but all since the 1930s who have understood that there had to be a massive social transformation, an economic transformation in this society and that they worked towards that assiduously and did not allow partisan considerations to remove that as the ultimate objective of any government of Barbados is something of which all Barbadians today in the early twenty-first century should be proud.

Mr. Speaker, I have set this debate in those terms because this is a process, a continuum. While our predecessors have been successful in expanding our access to basic rights to bring about that social transformation and while they have reversed the most repugnant aspects of our laws that spoke to the concept of racial superiority there are obviously still consequences of an historical experience that spans more than 300 years that we as a nation must still continue to deal with.

I make bold to say that we will not solve it as a government or as a generation but it is a continuing process to which we must all be committed and the fact that it cannot bear resolution at our hands and our designs alone should not deter us from the process of advancing the cause of social transformation of those who still bear the most negative consequences of that historical experience.

The Honourable Member for the City has a saying, which I do not always remember, from the Talmud that we are not expected to complete the task but neither are we at liberty to abstain from it. Indeed, Sir, this generation must play its role in the continuum of the social and economic transformation of this society so that a day sometime in the future, whether in this century or the next century, Barbadians will come to say that the initial 300 years of its modern settlement has now been completely countered by the commitment of generations of Barbadians who worked assiduously over a period of time to make wrong things right.

I look forward, Sir, to our being able to play our small part in that continuum. This Government has already shown its commitment in this regard in the establishment as one of the most important days in our national calendar being recognised, namely August 1, Emancipation Day. It is our firm judgment that that is the fount from which all else flows. Without the emancipation of slaves, without the removal from the Statute Books of the institution of chattel slavery, without the recognition that each person is entitled

to be treated as a human being that notions of universal adult suffrage or sovereign independence status, all of those things would mean nothing because any system of government that acknowledges that one human being is a lesser person than another is fundamentally flawed not only in the eyes of man but in the eyes of God.

I, therefore, believe, Mr. Speaker, that this country must forever recognise the first day of August and it must have a hallowed place in our existence. It allows us to reflect and to give thanks. For those who were enslaved, the tragedy of slavery was awful but for those who were the slave masters the tragedy of slavery is equally awful because, Mr. Speaker, as you know, those who commit the sins suffer as grievously very often as those against whom the sins are committed, because when the Day of Final Judgment comes upon us it is not only for the recognition of what deeds we executed but also the sins of omission are also counted against us because it is recognised that so long as we have the power to do something and we refrain from doing it then we are equally as guilty as those who perpetrated the acts. Therefore, the whole debate surrounding emancipation has to take into account that the healing which must take place is not only to be able to deal with the generations who have come since, whose foreparents were the victims of the institution of slavery but also to deal with the concept of atonement because those who allow the institution of slavery to preside have equally to be accountable in another place.

It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that any Barbadian who visits the Bussa statue will see the quotation on it that speaks not only to the tragedy experienced by black Barbadians but also to the tragedy of those whose lot in life it was to preside over that institution of slavery. We firmly believe that the only way a nation can go forward united and socially cohesive is if we accept that each of us has some reflection to do in respect of that experience.
11.45 a.m.

As Kofi Annan said in Durban at the opening of that conference, that each of us has an obligation to consider where he or she belongs in this complex historical chain, and very often it is always easier to think of the wrongs one's own society has suffered, but it is less comfortable to think in what ways our own good fortune might relate to the suffering of others in the past or in the present. Mr. Speaker, I believe, that is sound advice, not only in relation to the historical analysis of our common experience but indeed, Sir, in respect of our current life.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have said enough to suggest to you that this Government is committed to the cohesive development of this society. We recognise that while many of the tangible aspects of racism may have been removed from the landscape of Barbados, that an institution that

predominated our formation as a modern society, still has intangible consequences and aspects that we have now to deal with, some of those relate to our economic relations and some of those relate to our own sense of self-worth.

Mr. Speaker, it is a thing of great regret that those cultural intangible negative aspects of the institution of slavery, still remain with us, as a society. The existence of the Barbadian family unit, the predomination of households, headed by women alone, reflects on a society that still has not come to terms with the recognition that there is no longer somebody seeking to break up the family to sell someone to another owner. The refusal to accept responsibility for one's children is something which we must deal with. Somebody looking at children, as they are growing up and telling them that, your hair is too hard, your nose is too broad, or that you are running about in the sun too much in the vacation and you are getting too dark. All of these are common sayings that we know still exist within the homes and communities of this nation.

We have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to explain and discuss among ourselves that our society was defined by standards. It gave only one standard for excellence, which was the standard of whiteness, and that the only thing defined, was that whiteness was purity, whiteness was excellence and everything that fell below that, failed in comparison.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to start to deal with this matter now. There have been Governments, as well as institutions in the last 30 to 40 years in particular, that have started to deal with it in small ways. I want to say, Sir, lest I be accused of saying that because I want black people to feel that they are proud black people, I am being racist. And, that white people who are white, should also feel proud to be white. You cannot have a society firing on all cylinders, if the individuals who make up that society do not believe in themselves or their self-worth, if they are lacking in confidence, either by reason of their appearance or the manner in which they were brought up, then this society cannot benefit fully from their participation and from their building of this society.

I therefore believe, Mr. Speaker, that we need to start to allow black people in this country, in a comprehensive way, to know that theirs is not only a history of being a victim, but that blacks, in the context of global civilisation, have been able to achieve some of the most magnificent things that account for the development of civilisation.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, scholars today are recognising more and more that it is nonsense to believe that Aristotle and Socrates could each write a thousand themes themselves, which rest as the foundation of modern philosophy. Indeed, much of what we are, account and give

credit to Aristotle and Socrates for, came out of the bosom of a strong Egyptian civilisation that endured over ten thousand years.

We talk in terms of two thousand years since Christ but that civilisation existed for over ten thousand years, in an environment that was as cruel as possible to a human being, but they conquered their environment and rose to develop the foundations from which other civilisations of different races have now benefitted, in the context of the development of mankind.

Mr. Speaker, these are the things that black people need to know. These are the things that black children, who may want to feel that the existence of black people is defined by how much drugs they will peddle, how many guns they will shoot or by walking up and down. Even by walking with their pants on their hips, what I call the negative cultural influences of the Bronx that permeate our air waves, are reflected in the music our children listen to and which cause them to define an existence for themselves that in no way reflects what can be their true potential as individuals. I say, Mr. Speaker, that this generation has a responsibility to help remove some of those negative consequences of the institution of slavery, in the world in which we live.

Mr. Speaker, those who are interested in a more extensive set of research on the matter, as to where we stand in the context of the global development of nations and people, may want to read a book written by a Jamaican scholar, Charles Mills, called, "The Racial Contract." It is perhaps one of the best books that I have read in the last decade. It is a small book, but Mr. Mills speaks in the context of the development of history in the last thousand years. The book also shows how the law, philosophy and history have been defined in the context of a European paradigm to assert the racial superiority of the whiter people. And that when, intellectually, the premises upon which their actions begin to be challenged, they then redefine the intellectual argument, the philosophical basis upon which they are active and the legal construct that defines the parameters of their actions.

Sir, to paraphrase, we looked at the incursion of the Christians against the Moors and that was defined as a battle to rid the world of the infidels. So that the decimation of the Moors was not referred to as murder, genocide or terrorism but simply, as a battle which was being fought in the name of God.

Aside.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I am not going to come to the 21st Century yet, as the Honourable Member for the City is drawing the comparison, but I will get there.

Sir, when they could no longer use Christianity as the basis to justify their actions, and when that did not carry them in their expansionary mode sufficiently, they then decided that they wanted to conquer the world across the waters. They came to the Americas and, as I indicated earlier, found millions of people occupying the Americas. 11.55 a.m.

They then sought to justify their action by saying that these people were subhuman and that they were discovered somewhere but you cannot discover something or someone that existed before. So by the use of the word 'discover' they negate their very existence and by negating their very existence and the existence of the land, because there were no nation states, they also negate their humanity and by negating their humanity, they deem them as savages.

In realising that that intellectual argument could no longer hold water, they then deem that these people were not savages and could not just be killed so and they had to define a legal framework to continue to justify the philosophical basis from which they proceeded. That legal framework came to be known in two forms, the institution of chattel slavery and the institution of indenture servitude with the lesser of the two being indenture servitude which was maintained for those of the same race but who for reasons pertaining to class and other things were not acceptable as part of the established society.

After 200 years of the practice of the institution of chattel slavery, the intellectual argument started to be lost again and for the first time the intellectual dishonesty was heightened by the fact that there was no law in England or in France that deemed any human being a slave but that the laws were found in the context of the colonies. So if black people ended up in England they could not be treated as slaves because there was no law in England or France outlawing slavery.

They allowed, in the governance of the colonies and the Americas in general, the concept that the legislators in these regions could define the legal parameters of the chattel slavery institution. That was intellectual dishonesty of the highest order. When that argument could no longer stand they moved to the next thing. The next thing being that we have to recognise that they are human beings but that these human beings cannot govern themselves because they do not have the intellectual capacity, they are not trained and they cannot be responsible for civilised institutions, and out of that grew the institution of colonialism.

It also allowed them to be able to expand eastward in the conquering of India because they could not decimate India in the same way that they did the Americas and they could not deny that the Indians had their own civilisation,

their own history and their own religion. What they then did was to compare the Indian civilisation and the European civilisation and denigrate the Indian civilisation as not being as good as their own. It then allowed them also to counter the arguments that started in the 18th century and galvanised in the early 19th century against the institution of chattel slavery, so they agreed to remove it from the law books but in the context that it allowed them to maintain control by reason of the colonial experience.

What is colonialism essentially about? Colonialism is essentially about your concept of yourself, your capacity to govern and your capacity to run institutions – all of these are not valid – and you therefore have to give way to someone else who can do it better than you. Mr. Speaker, that ran for just over 100 years. The intellectual basis which supported the precepts of colonialism ran until the early 20th century when the beginnings of a movement throughout the colonies, European, French, American and Spanish, started to be challenged and people asserted the right to self-governance by saying that you cannot be telling them that you are better than they are and that you can govern them.

There were liberation wars in Latin America. There were liberation wars in Africa. There was movement in India and in the Caribbean. We all know about Cypriani and Butler. We know about Charles Duncan O'neal and we know about Samuel Jackman Prescod who, from as early as the middle of the 19th century, tried to debunk some of those theories. That is our personal interaction with these precepts.

We also know that the independence movement for all of us effectively did not start until after World War II. It started, Mr. Speaker, when they made the transition to the next set of legal and philosophical precepts that would govern the world. Those precepts, Mr. Speaker, were the universal declaration of human rights. World War II saw the league of nations being converted to the United Nations. World War II, with the decimation of six million white people in the form of Jews, saw for the first time the Europeans being prepared to reject the concept of the superior race, the Arabs as the Germans were then descended from, and justified their actions. When it hit home, they then understood, for the first time, that the legal and philosophical underpinnings that justify colonialism and forms of servitude, because for the most part the chattel slavery institutions had been outlawed, was the first time that the capitals of Europe started to begin to engage constructively in the transition to self-governance.

Mr. Speaker, the one problem with all of this is that we should feel that after 700 or 800 years we have reached the Holy Land. When I say 'we' I mean all of the people, black, white, Indian, Chinese, who have been disenfranchised by a European paradigm of governance for over 800 years. When

you define every human being as worthy of the dignity of a human being and that there must be equal treatment, what you do is to cast in concrete the imbalance in power and the imbalance in wealth that existed at the time that you deem now that all are to be treated equal and all are to benefit.
12.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the challenge for us, as a people, is how to be able to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Values, which I fundamentally believe to be correct. It must be respected, while recognising that there has been an imbalance both in power and in wealth that has largely been preserved.

Sir, I have spent the last ten minutes going through Charles Mill's arguments and recounting them for the benefit of this House because I believe that while we in the Caribbean have come, in a large measure, to show how one can begin to redress those imbalances that were preserved in the context of the middle of the last Century, we are not firing on all cylinders any more and we have abandoned the intellectual fight which has always been the foundation for the expansion of any group of people or any country.

Mr. Speaker, what do I mean by that? Those persons who define thought must, of necessity, be the ones who define what is possible in terms of man's actions and man's governance. In fact, a perfect example of it was found in the 1950s and 1960s when leading Caribbean academics were among the most notable scholars in development theory across the world. The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, have seen a common retreat on the part of these Caribbean academics. Therefore, it is no wonder that as a region, we are fighting the kind of battles in Government at both diplomatic and international levels that we are fighting today. This is because our self-interest and our national strategic interest are no longer underpinned by strong academic and philosophical theory, that our experience is no longer being defined by a school of Caribbean academics. We are now the victims of global academic theory that suggests that preferences and quotas are no longer necessary, irrespective of whether one has a large proportion of world trade or, as our Ambassador Mr. George Griffith likes to put it, 0.000 per cent of world trade.

We are now hearing European leaders of this generation telling us that they cannot be responsible for the actions of their foreparents. One is now hearing European academics trying to define how much involvement there was by Africans in the slave trade.

Mr. Speaker, we have serious work to do. I have spent seven years on the Council of the University of the West Indies and have maintained then, as I do now, that Caribbean academics must be on the front-line of the

development of theory and thought that allows us to do what is possible in the context of the governance of these nation states. Unless these Caribbean academics engage in research, write and defend their writings, then Caribbean governments will always be on the back foot in the global community.

Mr. Speaker, I have said enough to show how throughout our history, philosophies and laws have been used to bring us down. Sir, we find ourselves at the curious juncture because we accept the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During the 1930s and 1940s, we have also accepted that the reality of our existence was a huge imbalance in rights, in wealth and in power.

Sir, others have gotten embattled in the argument as to whether there should be affirmative action, *et cetera*. I am glad that I am a successor to a generation of politicians and statesmen who understood where the battle was located. As I said, the concept of development for Barbados has always been, in the last 70 years, economic expansion with social justice at its heart, to effect a social and economic transformation of this society.

Sir, we have not defined it as either reparation or affirmative action but have seen Barbados reaching a stage where less than 14 per cent of this population is defined as living in conditions of poverty and, in the context of the comparative analysis with other states, what is known as neopoverty. In other words, not deep deprivation.

We have also defined for ourselves a culture that affords the equality of opportunity but still have a number of things to do. We need to start addressing those issues as matured, responsible citizens, recognising that the easiest part of the battle has gone. The easiest part of the battle was: coming to a Parliament and removing a law which could have been done with definable groups of people, coming to a Parliament and passing a law to give persons the right to vote and building the physical institutions that could allow for the outward signs of prosperity. Sir, the hardest part of the battle is encapsulated in the language of the late Robert Nesta Marley, "to emancipate yourself from mental slavery..."

Mr. Speaker, that process will take time. It is a process that requires an assiduous commitment if we are truly to recognise the potential of Barbados as a nation in the world of nations. It is a process to which I believe this Government, the Opposition, and all right-thinking Barbadians, are committed. It is a process which knows neither colour nor race.

Mr. Speaker, by the same token where there are tangible consequences in the elements of racism in our society, those must still be removed. It is a fact that the

social and political rights have been much easier to confer than the economic rights. Therefore, if we are to go the whole distance, there must be an assiduous commitment to the economic upliftment of all our citizens, to give each the opportunity to benefit. This could only happen if there is transparency and fairness in all of our dealings, whether within the public or private sector.

The Government, through the Budget Speech of the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter two years ago and last year, has continued to commit itself to the purchasing of goods and services within the local market and, in particular, to the smaller suppliers, while recognising that any government that controls as large a percentage of the output of the economy as our Government does, has the capacity to play a benign role in the reallocation of wealth in this society. Sir, this Government is also proud to have within the context of our history as a Party and as a Government a commitment to land redistribution located, in the Plantations Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, which I maintain, Mr. Speaker, is one of the most revolutionary pieces anywhere in the former colonies of the world to redistribute land without seeing the bloodshed and violence that others have had to incur in order to have access to land.
12.15 p.m.

Sir, tens of thousands of families have benefited in this country in the last 20 years from being able to buy land at ten cents per square foot. We did not call it affirmative action but it was at the center of our development model in effecting social transformation of this society. I know that this may appear to be more contentious for narrow selfish reasons but the reality is, when a precursor to this Government in this Party also passed the Family Law Act and made amendments to the Succession Act, and outlawed the concept of bastardy, into which more than 70 per cent of Barbadians were being born up until the 1970s, that we understood that is part of effecting social transformation of this society.

Sir, I give those persons credit, because it took guts and courage to bring a law and to pass it, that recognised the cultural realities of most Barbadians that more than 70 per cent of Barbadians at the time, were not churchied in a marriage but they continued the existence, in many instances of their foreparents, where they lived together as a family unit and that the law should recognise it to show that as a people, we have understood that the very thing which stood as the most effective instrument of oppression in the context of our modern development is now the most effective platform for improvement and enhancement of our circumstances. Long may that be the case that which emanates from these Hallowed Chambers, should be used only to benefit the majority of people who call this land home.

Mr. Speaker, for the most part the tangible things have been dealt with. I, therefore, applaud the Prime Minister

of Barbados for having the courage in a society that John Hearn said was known for its 'Englishness'. At the time of our Independence he wrote – it is in the journal that was produced at the time of our Independence; one was also produced for Guyana. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for introducing me to it some years ago.

“One of the most fascinating studies over the next generation would be what the Barbadian makes of itself as a man responsible for his destiny. Not the least interesting part of this study, to my mind, will be how he modified this 'Englishness'. This process is going to be painful for me, and to some extent uncomfortable for all – for it has, as I have suggested, a cultural root that goes very deep and spreads very wide into the Barbadian psyche but some modification would be necessary.

The Barbadian is now truly a man of the new world. Between the pull of his past, and his conscious manipulation of his future, he should become the subject of one of the most creative tensions ever seen in the English-speaking Caribbean. If I am right in my assessments of his other qualities, he should make one of the most creative and original gestures as he attempts to resolve this tension.”

Mr. Speaker, this has clearly been what has been going on in Barbados over the last 36 years of our Independence. We have to come to terms with those things in our culture and in our history which we would wish to build upon, while seeking to remove those things that either relegate our existence or reduce our own sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that by encouraging debate on these issues, it is the only way that we have a sense of what people are harbouring in their minds or what causes people to behave in the way in which they behave.

I, therefore, salute the Prime Minister for putting forward, on the front of the agenda, not only the settlement of the Emancipation Day or the establishment of the concept and institution of National Heroes, but for recognising that his was a role to facilitate dialogue within the society so as to better allow us to manage, as he would call it, the sociology of our development.

I want to thank those persons who came forward and spoke clearly with a level of frankness that has allowed us to go somewhere advancing the interest of the building of a cohesive and harmonious society. I am not so naïve to believe that this can be the panacea for all evil but I do believe that it can, in fact, advance the cause for us to link a more just and equitable society.

Mr. Speaker, I feel strongly that black Barbadians have more in common with white Barbadians than white Barbadians have with Europeans or black Barbadians have with black Americans. There is an essence of being Barbadian out that common heritage forged from eating the same food, forged from interacting with one another, even if only in the dark of night to produce a blend that is unique to this country. I feel strongly that while there are differences that separate us, there is more in common to unite us from which we can move to build a better caring and just society. I believe that this Government is committed to building on that common heritage. It is for that reason that, while we accept that we have to do things that allow black people to be proud as black people, we also have to correct the very wrong impression that all white people were responsible for enslaving black people.
12.25 p.m.

I started this morning by referring to the very wrong that was done to some whites in respect of indentured servitude, but we have to develop a people who can think for themselves and not simply accept stereotyped images and base their individual actions on their responses on stereotyped images.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the presence of one white policeman in the Royal Barbados Police Force will not be the same reflection of their participation in the police in five or ten years time. I hope that we will continue to see more white people within the public sector as public servants of Barbados. I hope that white people will find it possible to offer themselves to the electorate as candidates but I also hope that we will see more black persons representing the established private sector of this country and representing the boardrooms of this country.

I also hope that the established private sector organisations of Barbados will reach out and understand that there is a level of informal business activity that they need to encompass not only for that purpose but also for strengthening the foundations of this economy and that businessmen like MADD who I still believe to be some of the best businessmen in Barbados should equally be speaking in the context of a Chamber of Commerce as persons representing the retail and distributive sectors especially from established businesses.

Unless that process of transformation takes place in the private sector we will be walking behind where we ought to be. Equally, Mr. Speaker, in the same way that governments must be accountable for who are elected to this Parliament, Government or Oppositions – I have to say Oppositions because there may be more than one, two or three or four. Quite seriously, in the same way that all of us are accountable within the public sphere, we need to have a process of clear democracy within the private sector

institutions of this country if we are to debunk the notion that the private sector is a white man over 50. That is how most people on the street feel. It is not true. While they may represent the longstanding businesses there is more business activity being conducted in this country by non-traditional players but they are not reflected in the private sector institutions and we need to see that level of openness come to bear.

We also need to recognise that in the same way the Government has established about five or six funds to allow people to have access to capital, whether it is the Micro-Enterprise Lending Agency, whether it is the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited, whether it is the Urban Enterprise Fund, the Rural Enterprise Fund, whether the newly established Innovation Fund, the Industrial Fund, whether the Agricultural Development Fund, whether it is the Small Hotels Stabilisation Fund, this Government recognises that in a country where people do not have a residual access to capital that capital must be made available and affordable to players if they are truly to become integrated in the process of creating wealth not only for themselves as individuals but for the country as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, those institutions in their large numbers have largely come about in the last seven years of this Government. It is true that there was a Barbados Development Bank before but a Barbados Development Bank still saw itself only in terms of major players whether in manufacturing or fisheries. We have a range of institutions that go from the very small end of the market with the Urban and Rural Enterprise Funds to those at the top end in respect of the larger sectoral funds for which credit has been established to facilitate retooling and expansion.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that that kind of effort in the last seven years must be matched by a similar effort within the private sector financial institutions of this country. If there is not a process by which you publish how many loans you have given and for what purpose, not who you have given them to, but the categories, then the perception of people not being able to get access to credit from banks without signing away their lives will continue to permeate the society. I believe that a number of things have to happen and I look forward, therefore, to the passage of the competition legislation as well as the consumer legislation in this Parliament before the end of the year. I believe that those pieces of legislation will go a long way towards creating a greater platform for transparency and accountability within the economic relations of this country.

Mr. Speaker, believe you me when I say that will be a major achievement in respect of removing some of the last bastions of control of this economy. It is not going to happen overnight but it is happening and I believe that both

governments have been committed to the process and we must continue to do so.

One of the major recommendations that came out and may I should go through some of them since persons listening may not know what they are. The Report was signed by all members with the exception of Sir Conrad Hunte who tragically died before the Report was submitted and we thank his family for his memory and for his service on this Committee.

There was a Minority Report by Mr. David Comissiong who said that he agreed with the main thrust of the analysis which underpins the Committee's Report and has no objection to the recommendations put by the Committee but was of the opinion that these recommendations were not far-reaching enough and did not offer Government and society a sufficiently potent and comprehensive set of remedies to consider. That is Mr. Comissiong's right in that respect but may I say at this stage that what we have done over the last 70 years is manage an evolutionary process without seeing the bottom of this country fall out. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that that is the development model that must continue, that we must be able to expand those benefits from a just harmonious and cohesive society without threatening the very underpinning of the society that governs the welfare of the majority.

There are some things which Mr. Comissiong refers to which we have already as a government either committed to are doing so that there is no great departure other than one or two key areas which I believe requires us to bring the society along as a whole rather than seek to impose what is only the special perspective of one group of people. We are always better off as a society when we can travel as one rather than seek to impose upon those below from above.

The Report, Mr. Speaker, has 44 recommendations and I hope that the Press would carry these recommendations in full before Emancipation Day.
12.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the very first thing the Committee recommended was that economic strategies in Barbados must always be linked to strategies for social transformation:

- That is the development model to which I referred.
- That is the development model to which this Government is committed.
- That is the development model, I believe, which all Governments in Barbados have been committed.

Sir, I hope that this will continue to be the case, in the future.

The Committee also, as its second recommendation, supported the vision for Barbados that was articulated in the revised draft preamble to the Constitution recommended by the Constitution Review Commission. May I say, Mr. Speaker, that at some point, in spite of the amending Bills today for the Constitution, we will have a new Constitution soon, that is reflective of that very wide process of consultation that took place some two to three years ago.

The Committee, as its third recommendation, recommended that every opportunity be taken to ensure that the people of Barbados share in the vision. Sir, it is saying that it is not only important to encapsulate this vision in the Constitution but that this must be a shared vision. This, Mr. Speaker, you would know has been the subject of many of my statements recently in here, particularly as it relates to our countering the non-traditional threats to security, that at the core of it, this country must decide what is that common shared perspective that we have, as a nation, and that will inform where we want to go, in the next 20 to 25 years. I hope that we will be able to identify opportunities for that kind of dialogue within communities across Barbados because, Mr. Speaker, the Government cannot legislate behavioural or cultural values.

The only way you effect change in behaviour and cultural values, is by a process of dialogue and individual commitment to change, buttressed by the teachings of the school, the church, the parents and a facilitating environment by the Government.

Mr. Speaker, they also recommended that on the staging of national events, a special effort be made to reflect the diverse character of the society. I am happy that last year and the year before, during Crop Over, we were able to ensure that persons from Asian, European and all different types of backgrounds were able to participate. Anybody who goes to the National Independence Festival for Creative Arts (NIFCA) nowadays, will see a far broader base of participation by different ethnic groups in this society and I hope that this will continue.

The Commission also indicated that it was practical and indeed, necessary for the society as a whole, to come to terms with its historical antecedents, to recognise and publicly condemn slavery and other forms of human oppression past and present and acknowledge the legacy of slavery in our society, and to resolve to work assiduously and collaboratively to build the society and its constituent parts, on the principles of freedom, social justice and respect for the human person.

Mr. Speaker, I have said enough today to show that this Government is committed to that and what I may also add is that in the run up to the Durban conference, Barbados was in

fact one of the front runners in respect of arguing the concept that slavery was, in fact, a crime against humanity. And that the fact that the Europeans and the USA refused to acknowledge it because they said it was not a crime when it took place, was an example of intellectual dishonesty on our part, since the Nuremberg war trials and the Charter that established the Nuremberg war trials recognised that they were seeking to correct behaviour that was legal at the time that it occurred, but which in their opinion was so offensive to the concept of man's humanity, that they had to try people for it. Sir, so the concept of retroactive action for crimes against humanity is one known to the very same European countries and American countries and indeed, within the context of the last hundred years.

The Committee recommended that Barbadians continue to assume responsibility for the self-repairs which are necessary. That, Mr. Speaker, reflects what I have been saying all morning that we did not wait for somebody to compensate us. We have been, over the last 70 years, bringing about the social and economic transformation of this society which was what was there after the consequences of three hundred odd years of denial of access to basic rights, and the most veneer treatment of human beings known to mankind's history.

Mr. Speaker, what I will say to you at this stage is that more intellectual dishonesty creeps in on that point of reparations and may I, for the record state what the Barbados Government officially, deposited in the international community on this issue. We do not feel that it is practical to speak about reparations in terms of compensating individual human beings for a number of reasons, including the difficulty which there is to trace that link. We do feel that the continued extraction of wealth, and the continued suppression of people within societies, such as ours, led to a cycle of underdevelopment in many countries, some of which still remain underdeveloped. And that what is required in the global community, is not only the acknowledgment and the apology for the wrong but also, a package of measures that will seek to allow countries to be able to do the very same self-repairs to which I have asserted, that we have been doing for ourselves, as a nation.

In other words, the quality of opportunity to education, you teach a man how to fish, rather than giving him a fish, you at least have provided for his sustainable development. If you give access to all markets to what we produce, then you give us the opportunity to be able to earn for ourselves in a context where, not only the economies of scale may be against us, but our historical experiences have prejudiced our ability to maintain a sustainable development platform, to affect that social and economic transformation.

The Committee also recommended, Mr. Speaker, that a special public information effort be launched so that the

Barbadian public understands these issues. This is critical as I have said, because what we do not want is the stereotyping on the basis of the sections which will, in fact, not allow us to be able to move forward in the best possible way.

The Committee also recommended that the revised school curricula, which have been done in the last year and a half continue, in that they address the issues of divisiveness, promote strategies of building national unity and building the individual self-esteem of persons. That process is already underway.

There was also a recognition that there was too little empirical data in Barbados on which to base a number of conclusions. In fact, the Committee would have commissioned a study undertaken by Ms. Maxine McClean, in respect of the private sector, a survey of the adult population and a youth survey as well, which Mr. Carter and Ms. Shontelle Monroe-Knight would have been responsible for, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to suggest that the only way we can govern effectively, is to continue to ensure that we have the best possible information available to us, whether in the public sector or in the private sector. We have to develop a culture that allows research and information to be gathered, not to mention what I asserted earlier that fosters the development of thought and the defense of that thought at an intellectual level and international level by our academics.

Sir, for that reason, I am happy that Professor Beckles is to become the Principal of Cave Hill, from this academic year. I trust and hope that the views which he shared with me on this matter, and which we are entirely in agreement with one another, in respect of the role that must be played by Caribbean academics, to lead the way for effective Governments of our societies in the international arena, that he will encourage the greater promotion of scholarship and the defense of that scholarship at an international level, when he takes over the reins at the UWI, Cave Hill Campus.

The Committee felt that as a matter of public policy, the Government should take appropriate action to facilitate the servicing of contracts won by small business organisations to ensure that there was prompt release of funds, and letters of comfort to be issued for them to give them access to working capital with the banks.
12.45 p.m.

Since this Committee reported, the Prime Minister, in his budget speech, announced a policy of support for local providers of goods and services as well as to ensure that we work with them. We have also seen the passage of the small business development legislation which is designed not only to work with the small businessmen but also to ensure that

they are better prepared so that they can benefit from the Government's procurement policies as well as larger procurement policies from the private sector.

The Committee also recommended that information available to the Land Registry Department relating to ownership of land including the names of persons and companies that are registered owners should be updated annually. Of course, this is because of the perception that land is a scarce commodity and that we need to operate on the very best possible information. My position on this issue, not the Government's position, I have always made that clear, is that it may be difficult for us in the future to legislate what we can and cannot do because of the discrimination that might take place between nationals and non-nationals. I feel strongly that the only way people can become truly wealthy is by building upon the wealth that they have generation after generation. There has to be a more assiduous effort on the part of Barbadians, particularly black Barbadians, in respect of how they manage wealth and land. The law now allows people to deal with land in terms of leasehold not only freehold and if there is a reversion of the leasehold interest at the end of some definable period then the basis for greater capital expansion in the future is still there even if not for you yourself but for your children or grandchildren and worst still if you are an institution for the institution's sustainable development. So I feel very strongly about that and feel that is one of the ways that we need to be able to proceed in this world in order to lessen the room that governments have in terms of discriminatory legislative provisions.

Sir, there are about 44 recommendations and I do not propose to go through all of them. In my view, the most important of these recommendations is a recommendation to Government to establish a commission that would be authorised to discharge, on behalf of the Government, responsibilities that the Government has acquired in accordance with the terms of the various international conventions to which we have become signatory, for example, human rights convention, racial and other discrimination convention, the denial of equal opportunity convention, sex discrimination convention and disability discrimination convention. In effect what this is saying is that where the face of discrimination shows itself in this country, other than going to the law courts, there should be a commission that presides over the hearing of matters where discrimination of one kind or another has been asserted and that this commission should be a quasi-judicial authority with a right of appeal to the high court when people feel aggrieved by the decision of the commission.

This matter is now before the Government, Mr. Speaker, and Cabinet will have to address its mind to it. From a personal perspective, Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that I support it because I believe that if you do not have a

mechanism by which people feel that their rights can be redressed then all we would do is to build on that bad sentiment and that ill will and people would then become less productive and feel marginalised in their own society. Therefore, we have a responsibility to create a mechanism by which people who feel that their rights, when being discriminated against, can be truly ventilated.

As the Constitution of Barbados currently stands, there is no right to protect you from discrimination other than discrimination by the State. So if you were discriminated by a private entity you have no rights under the Constitution but if the Government discriminated against you, you have that right. We have, therefore, Mr. Speaker, to fashion a body of laws that speak to the discriminatory practices that may still take place in the society and to set a clear and transparent framework within which these things can be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, if this was the only thing that was to come out of this report I believe that it would have advanced us as a society and advanced the institutions of governance in this society. I, therefore, Mr. Speaker, will be strongly supporting this particular recommendation within this Report of the Committee for National Reconciliation.

The Committee also speaks about the church needing to reflect more indigenous forms and values within the context of its worship and that the church needs to become more proactive in the context of family life in this country. In a way the Committee really goes towards the direction of speaking about the same non-traditional threats to security which fundamentally are now being influenced by a shift in cultural values that I keep speaking to publicly.

The Committee endorsed the recommendation that the statue of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow should find itself in National Heroes Square and that Lord Nelson statue be relocated to a more suitable spot and that the relocation be treated with dignity and respect. Mr. Speaker, this Government, in spite of all that has been said publicly recently, said some two years ago that Lord Nelson statue will be relocated to the Pierhead where we expect to have a full maritime museum and that the statue of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow will find itself in the centre of National Heroes Square. The fact that it has not happened yet does not mean that it will not happen. There have been some difficulties in terms of getting the Pierhead Development Project off the ground but Lord Nelson statue will go to the maritime museum that will be established at the Pierhead because, as you know, Barbados has the last remaining working screw dock in the world. We believe that the combination of the screw dock and the Admiral's statue will be a place of great historic and cultural interest for persons visiting this island, but we do feel that the location of the person who brought us to independence should be in the middle of National Heroes Square.

The Committee also urged on Government the establishment of the watchdog committee for the police namely the Police Complaints Authority. We know that Bill has been passed and it is now law. We have appointed Mr. John Connell as the Chairman of the Police Complaints Authority and subject to our being able to find a suitable location by the Ministry of Housing and Lands that Police Complaints Authority will be up and running very shortly.

We also had views of the Committee in respect of curriculum in schools as well as adult education, what we called non-formal education, recognising that the process of education is the bedrock from which you build a consensus in a society. The Committee also felt that there was a need to take constructive measures to ensure the working of co-education and that there be a review of the minimum wages legislation to ensure that there is no exploitation of any group of people in Barbados.
12.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is committed to the removal of any sort of gender imbalance or any exploitation of any category of workers and we, therefore, accept these recommendations. The Report also spoke to the realisation of gender equality being tackled as a matter of urgency and of locating itself within the context of anti-discrimination legislation. It also spoke to the commissioning of a systematic collection analysis and dissemination of that data. It also recommended that the Ministry of Social Transformation be at the centre of the social transformation process in Barbados that must continue to take place.

In addition, we are trying to establish a committee which will include Ministries such as: Social Transformation; Education, Youth and Sports; Health and Home Affairs. We recognise the focus which is used to deliver the social services in Barbados must not be focused on the service itself but on the individual development of persons who are to be the beneficiaries of that social service and, very often, where one now relies on that one social service, they must now rely on more.

Mr. Speaker, it also spoke to the presence and the participation of white Barbadians in this society and, in the context of they being a minority, that they locate themselves in a way in which many other developed countries have blacks as minority, there must be a sensitivity to their playing their part in the role of our development. Sir, one of the things to which it spoke was the level of participation by whites in this society.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very strongly that there is more in common between black Barbadians and white Barbadians than there is that separates us. I would like to believe that when outside of this country and I have to speak, that

I do so for Barbadians, whether they are black, white, rich or poor, male or female, and that we have a responsibility to be able to remove anything that divides us whilst still building on that which unites us.

Mr. Speaker, I believe when the Prime Minister, on 28th July, 1999, said:

“The Committee for National Reconciliation which we set to work today is therefore intended to help us to manage better the sociology of our development. It has a historic mission in that capacity to perform. I do believe that it will come to be regarded as perhaps the most important institution to be established by this Administration...”

“I urge the public of Barbados to face this challenge with courage in the sure conviction that those who labour in the service of a great cause can never fail...”

Mr. Speaker, I believe it took courage to establish this Committee, in the same way that it has taken courage in everything we have done to make wrong things right since the 1930s. Ours, as I said, is to be located in the context of a continuum, to effect the social and economic transformation of this society, to be able to put truly, in the recesses of our past, that 300 years of history where we saw the law, the society and the agencies of Government being used as tools of oppression against the will of the majority of people, both black and white, who resided within this country.

I believe that we in Barbados truly stand as a model of development for the rest of the world. Mr. Speaker, not just in what we have been able to achieve in terms of the raw data of the United Nations Human Development Index but in how it is possible to effect a social and economic revolution over the course of 70 years, in a cause that has led thousands of people to lose blood, in a cause which simply seeks to set right what should have been the status of those black and white Barbadians who came, either as slaves or indentured servants when they first came to this land.

Sir, I believe we could continue to effect change but I am sanguine about the world in which we live. I recognise that many of the elements of both political and philosophical theories – if not now laws – that asserted the superiority of one race over another, remains with us at an international level. When I can see countries asserting their might without resorting to the fundamental precepts of morality, social justice or international law, I begin to ask myself whether, in truth or in fact, the journey which we have seen in the development of our society at a domestic level, has ever been mirrored at an international level in respect of the international relationships of countries.

Mr. Speaker, I may have been less sanguine five years ago but I find myself today, in the context of this world

wondering whether, in truth or in fact, mankind will ever resolve the issues of the differences in races and in religions.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in that context, the Barbados experience has even greater relevance. We were the first society in the Western Hemisphere to have been constructed purely on the precept of race and we have reversed many of its consequences even though some still remain before us. Sir, I believe we must now seek, without being arrogant, whilst still dealing with our internal difficulties, to assert that which we have been able to accomplish, which other countries are far still from accomplishing. The battle in the Middle East and the fight against terrorism are all located on the basis of ethnic, racial and religious differences which have spanned centuries.

I believe that I have a responsibility, in the same way in which we are seeking to effect reconciliation at the national level, to be able to assert that any reconciliation at the international level would only come about, not through the means of military warfare but in the recognition that every human being who, at night, sleeps without food, the comfort of shelter, or the hope of an opportunity, stands as the basis from which the very evil of humanity can thrive and can represent himself in the modern-day notions of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, we believe if we could build a strong and united society, those seeds which eventually grow into trees to fight people, irrespective of the consequences to oneself, would thrive. We believe we have a responsibility to repair our damage and that while, at the international level, we assert those other things, fundamentally this society is about uniting people who may have disparate backgrounds but who, hopefully, have a common and united future.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the society would embrace both volumes of the Report, that the Press would promote the relevance of it and that the dialogue would take place with respect for each other, while recognising the only way in which we could move forward in a world that is antagonistic to small countries is as a united element drawing on all of the resources we have, while recognising those fundamentals are our people and our beliefs in each other.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I commend this Report for the Honourable House's noting.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 2.15 p.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Honourable House do now suspend until 2.15 p.m. was put and agreed to without

division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.
1.05 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand why the Government often wants to criticise the Opposition, and particularly, the Democratic Labour Party, for being either negligent or wantonly not participating in events of this sort.

The Democratic Labour Party, I have noticed in this booklet, is the only political Party that actually met with and consulted, as a political Party, with the persons who were appointed by the Government of Barbados to be the Committee for National Reconciliation. It is very important to make that point because I believe that from the outset it should be clear that the question of the work of the Committee of National Reconciliation was considered by the Executive Council of the Party, a position was developed and refined by the Party's General Council.

Sir, at the meeting which took place on April 27, 2000, we made it abundantly clear, after listening to the participants in the exercise, that the view of the Democratic Labour Party is, the work of such a Commission is important. Even though we may have difficulties with the word 'reconciliation', even in the context in which the Report was written and in the context in which the Minister spoke today, even though the earlier part of her address had less to do with the work of the Commission than it had to do with her own predisposition on the issue of matters of race, social division and transformation.

We nevertheless believe, as a political Party, that it is vital for us, as a nation going forward, to promote a consensus and to promote national unity wherever possible and that we should seek to develop a society in Barbados where everybody feels that they have a stake, and that they are enjoying the full incidence of their citizenship and that the work of the Committee on reconciliation could provide some pointers towards those particular goals. It was against that background we took up the invitation.

Sir, we suggested to the Committee that it was important for it to recognise that the people of Barbados would expect credible responses from the Committee and not just the development of a talk shop. Even though talking was important, there had been a lot of talk throughout the years on issues of race and social division and what the Committee would have to identify, they would be those impediments by way of perception and also the impediments that could be

identified on empirical evidence as the result of opinion polls, focus groups or other scientific methods. Sir, that empirical evidence and those perceptions were something that they would have to deal with.

We made the point to the Committee that it had to move beyond rhetoric because every Government, since the beginning of the 20th century, would have been focusing, in some way, in tackling some of these problems. People recognise that at the end of the day that unless you can get the full participation of all Barbadians in the process of national development, you are wasting time.

It was also felt by us that contrary to the viewpoint expressed by some members of the Commission and often in the media, by what one might call 'loose cannons', or to use the parlance of the Honourable Member for St. Peter in the context of the year, 2002, you can even call them 'comeyuhs', to the Barbados Labour Party. Those persons expressed emotionally, one-tracked, one-sided, tunnel-visioned viewpoints which did not recognise that the majority of young people are already imbued with a sense of their history, which we could do a lot more to augment and add to their knowledge and broaden their experiences.

Mr. Speaker, many of them were looking from a Committee of this sort to find answers about the way forward for them, in terms of their participation in a national development, race divide or class divide, being marginalised and of not being full participants in the process of economic development.

Sir, the Commissioners responded by saying that they saw their role in this exercise for the young people of Barbados and that unless they focus on their needs and aspirations, their task would be incomplete.

Therefore, when you raise issues like national reconciliation, you would probably find that everybody has a personal view or perspective and even though you put a commission in place, the objective of that commission should be to listen and to see, on the basis of listening and on the basis of the research that they undertake, to point out what are some of the critical concerns. If they are able to do so to correct some of the perceptions that exist, then analyse the information which is before them and then collectively put to the people of Barbados a perspective on the way forward.

Sir, the members of the National Reconciliation Committee came from varied political backgrounds and social backgrounds and the objectives, therefore, should be to collectively come up with recommendations that the Government could work with.

I think that it is extremely unfortunate that a member of the Committee would feel constrained not to ensure that his viewpoints were included in the recommendations of the Commission, particularly when members of the Committee said that they never had the benefit of his viewpoint when the Committee was meeting and that they were most surprised at the end of the day, to find out that he shared a somewhat different perspective to the perspective that they shared, this is always the danger in situations like this.

What you do is create a platform for single-issue activists to proclaim their particular viewpoints and they never made any attempt to seek to assimilate, modify or integrate those viewpoints into the wider grouping.

Sir, if the Committee for National Reconciliation contained a prominent white businessman, or the Head of the local Church of England, even though it is a national Committee on reconciliation, one of its members would feel obliged because of the social and political environment in which we live and because of his obvious predilection to single issues, to come out with a minority report.

Even the Committee on National Reconciliation could not reconcile its own views and I felt that did considerable damage to the credibility of the Committee and to the recommendations that it put forward.
2.25 p.m.

It demonstrates the extent to which some people will go to any length to ensure that they can continue to be divisive or inflame the debate in areas that are not entirely necessary. When you look at the Minority Report there was nothing in it that could not have been integrated into the mainstream of the work of the Committee and I think that is a great tragedy. Even though the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that the gentleman is entitled to his opinion, I think in the circumstances of this scenario it was critical that the Committee came to a consensus and if persons had divergent views the objection would be to take all of those views on board so that you had one report of the Committee on National Reconciliation on a platform to take Barbados forward.

I think that is a very important aspect of it because without a perspective on national unity and a focus on what is needed in Barbados to promote national unity many of the challenges that we face, including the challenge of national identity and cultural identity and all the other issues that come into play as we move towards greater global interaction or greater global government and the removal of barriers and the need to assimilate into larger groupings, will have a debilitating effect on our country.

We need to pursue the objective of national unity and I believe that at the end of the day there is in the Committee's report significant convergence of viewpoints

between what they have recommended and what was in the 1999 manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party. They recommended that land be zoned in Barbados something with which the Government has not agreed. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East or one of the other Members on that Side—I do not want to attribute to you something that is not your view—threw out a suggestion that it would be possible in a country like Barbados to zone land for different types of use. Rather, I should state that it is not the Government's policy to go in that direction but in the 1999 manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party not only did we indicate that there should be certain lands in Barbados that should be leased and not sold to non-nationals but we also recommended that land in Barbados be broadly zoned for particular uses and zoned to include areas that could not be sold to non-nationals. I refer in particular to those parts of Barbados like the East Coast of Barbados where Barbadians have holiday homes. I refer to other national heritage sites and so on which should remain part of the patrimony of this country. I think it was an important development that the Committee for National Reconciliation did recommend to Government that its land use policy needs to be revised even in the face of a report from this Parliament relating to foreign ownership of land in Barbados which the Government itself failed to take seriously and to take any serious measures consequent on the delivery of that report to this House some years ago.

The fact that the Committee for National Reconciliation has pointed out that this is an important and relevant issue to the process of national unity that both the perception of the impact of foreign ownership of land in Barbados as well as the reality, the impact on rising prices of land use patterns and settlement in Barbados, is something that any government that wishes to promote an agenda for national unity needs to examine and needs to put in place policies to deal with it. That, as I say, was in consonance with the manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party. Likewise, the issue of economic democracy.

The Government has responded to this particular issue by saying "we have contracts to give out in Government departments and we have taken a position that a certain number of those contracts will be given to small business people and that is our contribution apart from setting up a few funds here and there for small businesses to the promotion of economic democracy in Barbados." The Committee for National Reconciliation has obviously devoted more attention to the issue than the Government itself has devoted and has very strongly recommended that the Government take additional important measures to promote new ownership in Barbados, including the ownership of shares by workers in enterprises, including the development of linkages between small and big businesses and a whole set of recommendations that they have made, all of which

were previously to be found in the 1999 manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party.

We once heard in this country that it would be impossible and wrong for any government to identify a percentage of public contracts for small businesses. We heard that when the Democratic Labour Party was promising at that time 40 per cent of Government's patronage, if you want to call it that – School Meals contracts and hospital contracts. All of those things would be directed through an affirmative action programme geared particularly at small black businesses in Barbados. The Government said that that was not the way to solve or even to start to solve the problems of economic democracy. Two years later we heard that the Government itself had embarked on a programme, or so it said, which would make available to small businesses in this country a certain percentage of Government contracts. We once heard an Attorney General list all the businesses to which his Ministry at least had granted these contracts.

Even in the face of that, almost every single large black business in the distributive sector in this country has collapsed in the past two years, if not all. Either they have had to go on bended knees to the traditional private sector in this country, particularly the white private sector in Barbados, or alternatively all of those businesses one by one have had to shut their doors. The Committee on National Reconciliation has not finished its work and I would recommend to the Government that they re-open the investigation, reconvene the Committee to find out how it is that within two years of a committee reporting on the future initiatives that a government should take to promote economic democracy in this country, that within two years of that report being delivered, almost every single black business of any significance in the distributive sector has either collapsed or has to go on bended knees to the traditional private sector.

You see people writing every week in the newspaper saying how wonderful the Government's initiatives have been and how this is a black nationalist Government and how great their agenda is on the international field. They took on the OECD and they took on everybody but they cannot even fight for the survival nor put in place the policies in Barbados, not in France nor in South America, but in this very country which once had vibrant and successful black business even at a time when we were facing economic crisis. When we were going through our biggest economic crisis a prominent black businessman in this country was able to borrow in excess of \$30 million to establish a business at Haggatt Hall which the Government laughed at and said would never occur and it would never employ 700 people and never do any of the things which it did and you saw other enterprise developing, the Budg-Buys, Wyse Shoppers, Shamrock. Sir, this Government in the space of

two years has seen the destruction of every single large black business enterprise in this country.
2.35 p.m.

It has not yet been said in this Parliament and that is not something that has to come from the Opposition. There are people on that side who say they are imbued with a sense of social justice that they hold the keys to the emancipation of the black masses in Barbados, including those who were employed in those businesses. I am not saying any or all of those businessmen are paragons of virtue, but they are symbolic of what was happening in Barbados and what this Government was able to reverse in eight years, despite economic growth, despite high levels of foreign reserves, despite a mission for social transformation and despite high levels of employment.

Sir, look at this report and then compare. Reconvene this Committee for National Reconciliation, including the writer of the Minority Report, because he was very vocal on this issue. Reconvene the Committee and let the analysis be carried out so that young black people in this country who want to go into business will not feel that the examples of failure that they have seen in the last two years are endemic to black business in this country.

Sir, if this is not to be rhetoric and the usual scenario of posturing and smoke and mirrors and political propaganda, I do not need to hear about the conference on racism, if my own reality in Barbados tells me something different. Yes, it is important to understand what is happening internationally, and it is important to note all of the 'googly gook' from these international conferences and I praise the Honourable Member for the City for being alert to, and being aware of them, and informing this House when it becomes necessary to do so, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, but if the reality in Barbados tells us something different, we have a problem.

Sir, you can go to almost every other eastern Caribbean island and you can see new black entrepreneurs emerging, but in Barbados in the last two or three years, you have seen the dismantling of every single large black enterprise in the distributors sector. We only just started the distributors sector, but this is where we will start. Then, go to the small farmers. We are not talking about the minibuses who were slapped with additional taxes and punishment by the Government for what they said was their indiscipline. We are not talking about the vendors who are constantly criminalized and marginalised under successive Governments in this country, with nobody to represent them because the people who were once part of their vanguard, have now been reconciled to silence. The water sports operators in this country are pushed to the fringes. We would not go through the list.

The Government will tell you that we have created a lot of businesses. Yes, they have, the Urban Development Commission occupying a lot of contractors. That is quite correct. Get up and say that, and I will agree with you, because I know that to be the case. Maybe the Rural Development Commission is the same thing. Sir, but what about those persons who, prior to that phase in our development, were involved in the fishing industry, the number of people who lost their fishing boats and day boats, because of the policies of the Government in relation to credit to the fishing industry. Sir, the small farmers in Barbados and even those involved in the Land for the Landless Programme, speak of frustration.

Let us get frank, Sir, and I have to attribute it to the time span in which it exists. I cannot pretend that I did not believe, at one time, that as a result of the 1994 economic policies, there would be an expansion of even the existing black, medium sized or large businesses in this country. I hope that would have been the direction we were going in, but in this report, if the Members reconvene, the situation would have gone from bad to worse between December, 2000 and July of 2002.

Sir, in that time, this country would have gone on an agenda to promote national heroes, icons of the struggle for freedom which basically liberated black people in this country, and as a result, we were supposed to see a higher level of confidence, consciousness and participation.

During that time, Sir, we would have marched to Bussa's statue every year and laid flowers at the feet of a national hero, in an attempt to imbue Barbadians with a sense of reconciliation, regret for the past, respect for the achievements of an outstanding Barbadian. Yet, as you were trekking to that statue, the very business upon which Bussa was looking, as a symbol of black success, was crumbling, along with all of the others.

Sir, if it was only that one, the Government could do its usual thing and say, well we never expected it to continue, the man supports the wrong political party, the usual thing they did when it came to that particular gentleman. If they said that, there are some people who would believe them, but that is not true of every single large black enterprise in this country. It is part of the record of this House. You may not have heard it, but if you go back to 1995 and reflect on what was said about that particular businessman that had nothing to do with the debate we were involved in, but it is part of the record of this House.

Sir, I am talking about national reconciliation. I am not talking about that level of partisan politics. I am saying that perhaps there are some who would take that view point but something is wrong in Barbados, where you can have the

kind of phenomenal economic growth and all of those positive economic indicators but yet, you cannot see black entrepreneurs doing anything, other than going down to the small business unit, benefitting from some small loans, making dollies and guava jelly. I say that nothing is wrong with that but if that is all they are doing and none of them are moving up, and into enterprises into which they are employing larger numbers of Barbadians, or establishing linkages with larger businesses in this country, or breaking through even into the traditional distributors sector, then it is a recipe for frustration. Sir, because five or six years after, they get money from the Social Investment Fund or whatever they are doing, the same thing that they were doing when they started out, or even less. They are barely keeping their heads above water.

Sir, the Committee for National Consideration is right. We need to find a way to get them from that initial stage because if you keep them in that position, as a result of the economic policies, we are pursuing on neglect. It means we will never build an effective politically and economically vibrant black entrepreneurial class in Barbados.
2.45 p.m.

So the Committee must be reconvened to find out why we are going in the opposite direction. It must also be reconvened to find out why it is that you could set up funds in Barbados, give some money to a bodywork man and 18 months later he is in more debt than when you gave him the \$1 800 or \$2 000 or \$3 000 just before the last election to build his business.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: That is not indisciplined. If that is all it was, then to my mind the explanations which the Committee for National Reconciliation would have to give is that there is going to be no future for black businesses in Barbados. That is the kind of argument you hear from people who have had wealth down through the ages. They say that if you gave that bodywork man too much money he is going to buy a Suzuki Swift, put some rims on it, paint it in pastel colours and have four girlfriends and so on but I do not buy that one. You are not bringing that to me because I know that there are many young people in this country who have vision and aspiration, like the people who are involved in the fishing industry and fish processing. There are a vast array of them like the people whom you go to the Barbados Manufacturers Exhibition (BMEX) to see, the quality of their work, that we need to help to get from that initial point. You hear them talk about where they want to go but the problem is that when you leave BMEX, impressed as you are with what you see, you recognise that four or five years from now many of those businesses are not going to exist because the platform for expanding those businesses has not been articulated by

Government. The Government tells them that the way for them to expand is to go down to Enterprise Growth Fund where they are going to organise a loan for them and find a few contracts in a government department for them. That is what the Government has identified as the critical decision it would have to take to advance their interest. So you need to emphasise to small business enterprises and the owners of large businesses in this country that that is where the linkages must exist.

If you are a high quality producer of handicraft, curtains, doilies and guava jelly, you need to be able to tap into larger businesses in this country by way of ownership. Those large businesses as well must understand that where there is a small business that is a shareholder of their business that it is within their interest to advance the success of that particular small business but what happens in Barbados is the opposite. The owners of those large businesses go up to BMEX, notice what people are interested in and then hive off a particular activity for their cousin, nephew, niece or son. Many of those activities, as I have said, are activities that would have been developed by small business people in this country with unlimited resources. It is like what has happened with the all-inclusives and the movement from the private water-sports operators who had access to all of the beaches in Barbados both from the roadside and the seaside to an environment now where there are only certain places on the west coast where the taxis in Barbados can take them. So the vast majority of them may converge around Bombas Restaurant in Paynes Bay because the taximen take them there and know that they will get to meet a local water-sports operator. Between there and right to the rest of the west coast there are only two or three other spots where those independent operators are able to gather and do business. So we need to look at that business environment in this country and provide access and opportunities for our people to succeed. I think we have done a lot to retard and slow them down and keep them back and this cycle must come to an end, that is why this Committee needs to reconvene. Its work is not over, therefore, I am not accepting this report simply for the sake of accepting it today.

I talked about small farmers but let us look at the manufacturing sector. Tell me which of the vibrant black businesses in the manufacturing sector that once existed is existing now? There is one young man in the furniture sector who is working hard to try to coordinate things with his company, I cannot remember what it is called. We must remember the names that we had in the furniture industry and the names that we had in the garment sector in Barbados. These were not the businesses of the traditional Barbadian private sector, these were the real entrepreneurs, the people who come up with ideas and fashions and follow trends and work their investment. They are not property owners who

just lease out buildings or who buy and sell. Invariably, they have to do all of that together to succeed.

Apart from the cultural industries in this country, there is nothing else one can point to that we can see significant growth and development of new black businesses. In the offshore financial services sector there is a combination of factors at work but by and large we are not seeing the growth in the employment or in the creation of businesses to service these offshore enterprises in the way that was once anticipated. In fact, what you are finding is that a lot of people who went out there as independent operators, maybe servicing two or three companies, are now looking to settle for a reduced salary in one company. So you have well-qualified and well-trained accountants and professionals working in the offshore sector in Barbados who five years ago were earning three times what they are earning now. That is as a result of the inference of prominent people in the international business and financial services sector who put it abroad that we were paying employees in this country too much money but all the while they were bringing in foreign accountants and are still doing it despite all the proclamations and *ex cathedra* exhortations from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East because it is under his watch that it happened and is happening. They are bringing in accountants from all over the world and installing them in Barbados, we have to give them work permits because that is part of the business practice, giving them houses in Sandy Lane, giving them motorcars and they are paid very often five or six times if not more the salary that a Barbadian with an equivalent qualification in the offshore sector is earning. Sir, that is a recipe for social disorder because here you have well-trained professionals and leaders in your community moving through the ranks of the middle class but seeing themselves totally marginalised in the land of their own birth.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have to find a way to deal with that and we cannot say that it is the way in which the offshore sector operates. If that is the way in which it operates and it is to the disadvantage of the aspirations of Barbadians and to make Barbadians feel uncomfortable in the land of their birth, then we have to do something to change it because these are the people who are going to be making a contribution to the highest levels of government and to decision-making in the future.

Sir, with the process of globalisation taking place, there is no guarantee that, with all the money we are spending in fighting the OECD, the United States Government and everybody, we would have anything else left when we are finished. The Government has high hopes but the Government itself, sends very conflicting signals.

Sir, the last point I wish to attempt is tourism. I know the Honourable Member just attempted to heckle me so that I could remember that he is in Chamber.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I said 'attempted'. I never said the Honourable Member did. The Honourable Member would understand why I used that word.

Sir, in the tourism sector, where are the black entrepreneurial families? There were a lot of them existing in the past. None of them now has any business and they are at the top level of decision-making in Barbados. The former Attorney-General of Barbados and current Chief Justice's family business has collapsed. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South, his family business has also collapsed. These were all black-owned family businesses.

Sir, there is a reason for this and, very fundamentally, it has something to do with, not only our ability to transmit, through generations, that ethos of business success and entrepreneurship because, very often, the same person who has started the business lives to see it collapse. Therefore, we are not speaking of the transfer of a business from enterprise to enterprise. We often hear persons saying that black businesses in Barbados do not survive a generation. What that tells us is that the person who has started that business has not been able to take it anywhere. What happens is that the person who starts the business comes to the realisation that this is not the kind of business for their children to work.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Then with all the threats of trade reform and globalisation coming onto one's plate, comes the understanding that we are now asking people to build and to grow businesses in an environment that is not conducive, therefore, people opt to go into the professional classes or other activities, whether it is the civil service or other areas where they could get a regular salary and, therefore, that business success cycle does not transmit from generation to generation.

We could take these issues and look at them. This is not new, neither are they anything of phenomenon with which we cannot deal. We are small enough in Barbados to pick these challenges up and deal with them, to be frank about them. I maintain that small size is not always an impediment. We are small enough that we can trace the successes and the patterns of successes of white businesses in Barbados.

Sir, do you know what is remarkable? Black historians have already done that. We read their books and then put them aside. We read the Mutual affair and put it aside. Sir, so that there could be scenarios occurring in the year 2002 in which shareholders are even less relevant to the enterprise

than they were at the time of the Mutual affair, yet people do not even dust off the book to see where they are in relation to the economic levers in Barbados in the year 2002, *vis-a-vis*, 1989.

We cannot afford this because the Report has made it abundantly clear that the analysis among the vast majority of young, black people in this country is that race is an impediment to their success and it is not going to be answered by playing Bob Marley tunes and encouraging persons to go to fetes and to have a good time.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I have enjoyed that too but when the song was over persons left there without any sense of creativity. Yet, 20 years later, people are relying on Bob Marley to restore one's creativity. There are some persons who are in the advance of the nationalist and of the agenda to empower black people in Barbados who are telling people the wrong things.

Sir, the issue of family is very important. The Commission has recognised that the Barbados Government or the society should not promote one kind of family over the other. Do not promote the nuclear family over the other kinds. Many Barbadians may be born into family circles where they did not have both parents or in circumstances where one parent has emigrated and that person had to be raised by another relative.

Sir, our society has so changed that a lot of movement of people away from communities has taken place. People have gone into new communities, leaving those relatives behind, leaving the social props that were once there and not going back to them, to such an extent that one cannot say the State does not have an obligation to the society to say what is an ideal or a balanced environment for a child to grow up in – and it does not have to be the nuclear family. I am not arguing for the nuclear family. I was not fortunate to have grown up in one of them. My children are fortunate to have grown up in one and children of other Parliamentarians are fortunate to have grown up in one but there is an ideal or near-ideal situation where responsible parents... a programme engineered by the State to focus on parenting. The easiest thing in the world to do is to become a mother or a father. How does one teach others the desirable precepts of parenthood if there is no moral compass.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It is not economic only. There must be a moral compass somewhere in there. My criticism of the Report might be that,

that it seems that they have to pander to the people who talk foolishness in Barbados, by giving the impression that there is no moral compass and that parenting is about providing money for children and dropping them to school, even if you do not talk to them, putting a roof over their heads and making sure that they follow all the school's rules but I say there is a component that needs to be focused on.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, no Committee on National Reconciliation can avoid the fact that the child in a black family in Barbados is going to grow up with certain perceptions of his or her position in this society, that is why you have to have a moral compass. That is why the State has an obligation to be involved in reversing those perceptions. That is why the State must be able to say that the best way to reverse that perception is not to copy others but for us in Barbados to come up with a desirable sociological format for raising Barbadian children who are patriotic, hard working, who have a moral compass, who can be successful, who are creative and disciplined, there is a way to do that.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There is also a way to analyse why those in the majority might be the way they are but when you do the report, the same ones in the majority feel that they are disadvantaged.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, they have everything right, according to you and me, but when you interview them, the highest percentage of them feel that they are disadvantaged by their race in a black country that it needs further analysis.

Sir, the truth is, that is not going to be the experience of a child of black Vincentian or Antiguan family. Why then is it going to be the perspective of a black Barbadian youth? In Trinidad it may be different, it may be more divided and, perhaps, both races would tell you that they are disadvantaged. The Indians and the blacks would say that they are disadvantaged in Trinidad.

Sir, Trinidadians have had power-sharing. I was in Trinidad when the Indian cricket team was playing and I was walking across a car park and a guy saw an Indian friend and said to him, "I know who you are supporting tomorrow." The fellow said, "Why do you think so? You just looked at me and assumed so because I am an Indian and I would be supporting the Indians." He said, "What about Chanderpaul and Nagmootoo and the others?"

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I was a student in Trinidad and India was playing against the West Indies and when Indians felt oppressed in Trinidad and part of their rebellion to what they saw as that oppression was the fact that it was not only perceived but they actively supported the Indian and the Pakistan teams when they were playing in the Caribbean.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, there is a big difference between what we think we are providing for people and what, at the end of the day, they perceive they are benefitting from. If a politician does not understand that, you will believe that to change a society, all you have to do is to provide more of the same things, which is always a dilemma. We would believe that people would feel better if they get more of the same thing. It may not change their perception of their status.

I assume that what national reconciliation is about, is changing people's perception of their status. Trinidad eventually had an Indian Prime Minister and that had a psychological effect on black people just as the withdrawal of white people from politics in Barbados had an effect on white Barbadians, who seem to say that because of the makeup and character of our Parliament, they are marginalised.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, many of them withdrew from participation and went to Australia and New Zealand. It may be their perception now that they cannot come back into politics. The Honourable Member for the City said that they were voted out but not too long ago Barbados had white leaders in political parties. Perhaps, they recognised that there is no need to be in here. This is not where the locus of power is in Barbados. When you look at some of the configurations that are in Barbados, the ownership of land, accessed through the Social Partnership, they are right. There is no need for them to be in here. Their agenda does not require them to come in here. That is our fault. Again, this Report of the Committee for National Reconciliation needs to be reconvened and to analyse that perception.

I believe that when the Committee for National Reconciliation looked at the issue of families in Barbados, it was right to focus on this as a key component of raising the sense of security and consciousness of our young people. It also located the family at the centre of changing perceptions. I have always said that the family is at the centre of changing the perception of young people of investment. If you grew up and you never saw a Prospectus or a Share until you reached middle management level in a business, then those things are not part of your world. If all you see is the credit

union, then you will not believe that there is any way for you to access other forms of ownership of economic wealth or to be involved in other forms of decision making. I think that it is important to reverse that cycle through the families.

Mr. Speaker, that is something that needs to be analysed and this Committee needs to be reconvened to look at some of those issues more in-depth. Sir, a lot has happened in the last two years. Things that we never thought that we would see happen in Barbados under a black Government, have occurred in Barbados in the past two years.

Sir, this Committee needs to be reconvened to analyse them, not to blame the Government but, maybe, they have been powerless or want to be powerless, to want to change these things. Or, maybe, their focus has been on piecemeal solutions, or giving the impression that it is helping those at the bottom. It has also failed to recognise that those Barbadians, in the middle, also need to be involved in the process of nation building. In other words, not every social problem in Barbados resides in the poor communities in this country. There is a lot of social transformation that needs to be done to get the children of middle-income Barbadians to be better off than their parents are or even to maintain the same standard of living that their parents are maintaining. But there is a perspective that every time we talk about a new policy in Barbados in social transformation that we must root it only in solving the problems of people at the very bottom of the economic ladder. If you do not do something about the plight of people in the middle as well, then they cannot help those at the bottom. You have to help both and that is where the bulge in relation to our population exists anyway as a result of the successive work of political parties in this country.
3.15 p.m.

Therefore, the perspective on what national reconciliation is about is going to differ from individual to individual. Our objective should be to instil in Barbadians confidence at the individual level so that they can rise to their highest potential. Nobody in this country should feel disadvantaged because of race or social origin. I have never considered it to be an insult to me when people say, "he is a red man", even if they mistake me and say I am what I am not. It does not bother me. I know what I am.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member pretends my Haggatt Hall family background—he had better get it right because part of that area is now coming to him, not that I am traversing the area officially but I may have to go back there and say the Honourable Member is telling lies on me because he knows he, more than anybody in here,

knows the origin because I understand that our respective families go back some generations. I only discovered that when I went to Government House or when he first got into the House of Assembly because it would not suit the Honourable Member, to the best of my knowledge, to give the impression that the two families go too far back because the Barbados Labour Party's propaganda and de-imaging of people in this new dispensation is to give the impression that they are born into wealth and privilege and they do not understand the need of the average man. So you live with that.

The point I am trying to make is, to my mind, an extremely important one, that we need to build Barbadians of confidence who know who they are and who feel very strongly that they can make their way in the world; who are able at all levels of the society from primary school to mix with anybody; who pursue excellence and who do not feel inferior or superior to others, who are willing to work with people in the process of national unity and development, who are not involved in sneering at the social origins of others.

A Barbados in which one class of person is not going to believe that their children must go to a particular school or in which they believe in going to that school they will only meet people of the same social background. We should be encouraging our people to mix, to be friends and maintain friendships and to work together. Barbados is small enough that we can do it. Big countries cannot do that kind of social engineering but small countries like Barbados can do it.

If the grandfather of the current Prime Minister of Barbados or great-grandfather is a successful white landowner in this country, that should not be an impediment nor should it give him any special pedigree or advantage to what he has to do for the upliftment of people. I do not judge people by their social background. I judge them by what they have achieved for Barbadians.

Everything that is said in Barbados today about your social origins as a politician would disqualify Errol Barrow. Everything that is said nowadays that you have to come from a certain background to understand the plight of poor people and people who rise to the top of businesses in this country and so on...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: ... you have to give it some currency because it is repeated often enough because people believe that it has the impact of reducing your confidence and, Sir, I do not believe that is the kind of Barbados that we should be pursuing. Even politicians should not be promoting those kinds of silly distorted messages to the public of this country. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what you

have to look at is the extent to which the Government is pursuing an agenda that will conduce to national unity; that will give confidence to citizens, particularly those who are marginalised, and that will give hope, particularly to our young people, that they can achieve their greatest dreams, not by clicking fingers or going to some Government department hoping to get anointed by some politician, but by hard work and application and that doors must be open to them.

Government has an obligation where those doors are not being opened to say that those doors are not being opened and to ask initially and where it is not successful in asking if it is not going to use power to advance the interest of people in this country, then surrender it to somebody who will. That is my view in relation to the report of this Committee on National Reconciliation.

Sir, I believe that there are many Barbadians who left this country and went to live in the United Kingdom and suffered the most debilitating effects of racism, not just students. You hear people in here who lived in London for three years talking about racism. There have been people who were in England ten years and longer, prior to them, some for forty years working in London Transport, working in all kinds of menial jobs, living in the same rooms – I am not talking about sleeping in a bed because some of them did not have a bed to sleep on – residing in the same room in a house with one toilet and sometimes no bath for years in the dingy city of London, working hard to rise to the top of their professions.

Sometimes you go to British Airways and meet black Barbadian engineers, respected from top to bottom. I went to visit one of those plants and the Barbadian who took me around was wearing his overalls, a little bit of grease here and there, but he was able to knock on the door of the Chief Executive Officer. I am certain there were some other fellows there who could not do that.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes they were very good friends. You know in Britain the British have a way of being civil even if when you get into the train to go home or if you are walking on Oxford Street they walk straight past you. What I am trying to say is that they worked through the system and established a reputation, taking and accepting every taunt and it has heaped up. If they were able to endure that and come back home successfully, it must tell you something about the Barbadian character. Therefore, I believe, as I said, that if they can do it, having left here imbued with those virtues and qualities, then we in Barbados must be able to go through a process of economic and political transformation that ensures that the next generation

of Barbadians is not debilitated by the perception that race is a major determinant to their success in life. We may not achieve it in one or two generations but I believe that it is capable of achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I really cannot give against the report because, as I said, it pointed out some of the things that were in the 1999 Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party. It would be intellectually dishonest of me and uncharitable simply because it is a Government commission for me to say that I am not going along with it or for *ad hominem* reasons because there may be two or three people whom I think had their own personal agendas.

3.25 p.m.

The Report speaks for itself. It does not cover all of the grounds. It certainly does not tell us what happened between 2000 and 2002 which is something we need to analyse. Therefore, I ask the Government not to treat this as a final report which goes on a shelf somewhere. It has gone on a shelf so far. Let us not fool ourselves. Despite all the rhetoric about this being the most important Committee ever established and so on, this Report was laid in December 2000 and has remained unattended to since then, ever since on the parliamentary agenda.

We are now in July 2002 so I do not accept any statement by anybody, least of all the Honourable Member for St. Peter, that this is the most important committee – what were the words used? I cannot even recall but I think he had an out, because he used the word, ‘maybe’, maybe the most important committee – to have been established in Barbados. If it was the most important Committee, we would have considered deliberations a long time ago, and many of the recommendations that it made would have been in place. Perhaps, we would have saved a few black businesses from demise, perhaps we would have placed some young people in Barbados on a path to the very top, and perhaps we would have truly made some advances in the interest of national reconciliation in this country. But it is still my devout hope, Sir, that a process of national reconciliation which would put an end to that divisiveness and the perceptions, particularly of young Barbadians, will come full cycle and that we in this country will be able to see Barbadians working together in unity, putting a positive foot forward, in the first step towards even great success for our nation.

Thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate on the Resolution, to note the report of this Committee for National Reconciliation. It is interesting to note that the sub-team is a shared vision for the 21st Century. Therefore, although the foundation of this Report and of its work include an analysis of where we have come from, what

has gone on in recent times and so on, the prime outcome is really for us to achieve that shared vision for this new century.

Mr. Speaker, when we consider though that one of the unfortunate but major characteristics of the Barbadian society is a continuation of the tradition of turning a blind eye to major social problems, an unwillingness to face up to a number of issues affecting the society. It is, first of all, remarkable that this Committee should have been established. Sir, because the truth is we, as a society, very often do not confront our challenges openly. In fact, sometimes persons who raise serious questions in the public domain are not encouraged. But to be able to discuss the socially divisive factors of race, class, gender, religious or political affiliation certainly, I think was a very important step for us in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall the great furor that was associated with Professor Hilary Beckles giving some lectures on the aspects of our history during the 1980s. There were people who wondered where this man came from and why was he stirring up so much trouble and how we lived so peacefully and with no noise. Mr. Speaker, no one was inciting anything. It was merely an examination of our past. I am saying that in the context of this unwillingness by too many Barbadians to move beyond fearful silence, or quiet whispers when dealing with difficult issues, the fact that this Committee was established and conducted its work, represented an important step forward for the Barbadian society. It is against that background, Sir, that I want to speak.

Sir, it is important for us to ensure that part of the building of our nationhood, will include having that confidence in ourselves, and we will be able to deal in a very direct manner with the challenges which face us. It is really the same spirit, the willingness to tackle issues such as they exist which would have inspired the Government to establish this Committee on National Reconciliation, which would also have caused us to do a number of things that for quite a while, needed to be done but were not addressed.

For example, Sir, the matter of recognising the importance of this very period that we are in, July 26, would have been recognised as a day of national significance, recognising of course that contrary to the prevailing view of Barbados years ago, it was something that you did not talk about and was taboo. Sir, not only did we recognise the importance for national reconciliation, for acknowledging important aspects of our history, and using them as a basis for going forward, but we also took the bold and proper step of pardoning those persons who were convicted of various crimes, in pursuit of their legitimate cause in relation to the riots.

Sir, you would have thought that the Emancipation of the majority of residents of Barbados who were here as slaves, because as you know, the ratio of slaves to slave-owners was extremely high. There were many thousands more slaves than there were slave owners. Sir, the celebration of 1st August, as Emancipation Day is something that should have been done many years ago. Again, that unwillingness on the part of our society to look at issues and to deal with them directly was part of the keep back. But, again, I am pleased to note that we were able to do that, Sir.

The matter of recognising the contribution of all of our patriots, in particular those whose contributions would have been of such a magnitude and qualified, as could be considered as heroic, that the establishment of a National Heroes Day and the naming of ten persons elevated to that rank, recognising contributions across the spectrum of politics, trade unionism and the whole series of areas in which persons made a contribution. Of course, the matter of looking in a very bold and direct way, at our Constitution, to make a determination as to whether that instrument passed its 30-year mark was in need of any adjustment, change, improvement. Sir, looking at these series of things that have been done, I am pleased to be associated with an Administration which would take such bold steps and which is very clear of the need for us, as a nation and as a people, to take very positive steps at building our self-image.
3.35 p.m.

There were too many instances where as a people we have doubted ourselves, where we cast very doubtful glances even at our own shadow and were afraid to act or to do this or do that. I believe that this necessity to build positive self-images of all our people can only be helped by those nations that I have mentioned and by this Committee for National Reconciliation. This is not to say, Sir, that we have not, even at the time that this Committee was established, gone a long way in our society to achieving some of our objectives. In fact, there are those persons who always take the view that whenever you set about to investigate a matter or to question anything, that you are reflecting on what has happened in the past. I share the view which is expressed by the Right Reverend the Honourable Rufus Broome, former Bishop of the Anglican Church of Barbados and Chairman of this Committee, who at the launching of this Committee on July 28, 1999 said, and I quote:

“There can be no doubt that our institutions – political, economic, social and religious – have served us well, – that is carried in volume two of this document – and have made no small contribution towards our total development. We have been blessed with open democratic structures, effective and impartial administration of justice, and a civic culture nurturing liberty, honesty, morality and respect for human rights.

How different it could have been – he asked – when we reflect on life in other lands with kangaroo courts, warring factions and dictatorial regimes.”

So clearly, Sir, we started this exercise of the work of the Committee for National Reconciliation with a clear perspective that we had done well compared to other societies. However, recognising that our history of slavery, of colonialism and being a newly independent nation, is a history in which a minority of people own a significant part or the majority of the wealth and where unlike in other countries where minority and majority issues are different from how they are in Barbados, for example, when blacks in the United States of America speak about their rights and their needs they speak as a minority but in Barbados we speak as a majority and, therefore, the issues as represented are different, and notwithstanding our success in relative terms, there were many unresolved issues which would have arisen out of those aspects of our history.

A society such as ours, built on 300 years of law, of social customs and of values rooted in a system of slavery which had racism as its most vicious underpinning is not washed away by any instrument such as being made independent and having your own Constitution. So clearly, there continues today to be a need for each and every one of us as citizens of Barbados to deal with those practical realities. Our history and our culture cannot be swept under the carpet and the attempt to deal with it honestly and openly must be commended.

In terms of this phase of our development we have to deal honestly with our past and we need to continue the work and the process of building a nation. The significant periods and the historical development of Barbados would have been the movement from slavery to emancipation and the further movement from emancipation to Independence. Of course, having become independent we need to ensure that we build a modern nation and in this period therefore the work must continue. We need to ensure that we have an economy which is characterised by free and fair competition. We need to ensure that we strengthen our social and human capital. Every one of us must be able to participate fully in our society. We need to make sure that we continue the process of democratisation in all aspects of our being not only politically but economically and socially. Basically, Sir, that shared vision for the 21st Century has to ensure that everyone has a stake.

Sir, I believe that we have achieved our greatest success in the modernisation of Barbados thus making it a just and equitable society in the political realm. Since 1937, in terms of recent history which was a most significant point, we have been able to evolve a system in which any and every citizen can participate fully right up to the level of

coming to this Parliament in a way that could not have been done prior to that period. Indeed, Sir, since that post-1937 period there was rapid progress on the political and social front. I believe that a reflection on the history of that period would indicate how the Right Excellent Sir Grantley Herbert Adams, the Moses of his time, the father of modern democracy and the father of the social revolution in Barbados, along with his colleagues would have transformed Barbados from the elitist oppressive exclusive regime to one which allows for the widest participation by adults. There was no question of property qualifications. There was no question of colour barriers in the political and social realms. But, Sir, it is in that area, and, of course there were economic gains, where there still continues to be our major work.

Sir, a Barbados society of the future must continue to emphasise the dignity and the worth of each individual. We need to ensure that our fundamental rights and freedoms which in some instances we take for granted continue.
3.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be concerned and to ensure that the gains of society are distributed fairly. We need to ensure that, on the economic front, we are able to have the fullest participation of all people. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John has made a very false point that there has been no advancement by black people in Barbados and that their businesses are failing.

Sir, I need to remind the Honourable Member for St. John that Barbados and certainly this Administration, has been in the forefront of a deliberate effort aimed specifically to empower small black entrepreneurs and to ensure that they are able to move from being small to being large. We have also ensured that tax has been reduced from 40 per cent to 25 per cent and that there is also duty-free importation of equipment and supplies. Sir, Government has consistently not only encouraged but has also empowered the organisation which represents these small businessmen because we have said that, as a matter of policy, we are going to make sure that small black business persons, especially new business persons, must be able to sit at the table and must have a strong voice. They must be able and be as effective in the representation of their members as the older associations, for example, the Barbados Hotel Association, the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and the Barbados Manufacturers Association.

It was this Government that has financed the Secretariat of the Small Business Association. We recognised that we not only needed to build individual businesses but that, as a class, they needed to be able to participate. Therefore, the revitalisation of the Small Business Association of Barbados is a deliberate act on the part of this Administration.

Sir, by our encouragement, there is a company named SBA Enterprises Incorporation which is a corporate arm of the Small Business Association. This company now gets a significant number of contracts for the supply of goods and services from the Government. They have been doing things ranging from the supply of chickens to the School Meals Department, to construction work in other departments of Government and to the supplying of material. They have been able to use that corporate entity within the association to bring together a number of small business persons who, on their own, might not have been able to benefit from some of these larger contracts. This was part of Government's deliberate plan to specifically send work in their direction. Therefore, for the Honourable Member of St. John to give even a hint or a suggestion in this Chamber that no strong, affirmative action was in place for the Government, is to ignore the reality which, everyday, is facing the Honourable Member for St. John.

In addition, this Report and others have identified access to finance and access to information as being two of the major problems that are facing new entrepreneurs in Barbados. Sir, the reality is that, given our history that our white entrepreneur counterparts have the benefit of a social network from which to draw, which would allow a young person wanting to engage in a business, to be able to enquire from an uncle or a family friend how it is being done. The first-time black entrepreneur does not have that facility from which to draw. Sir, what has this BLP Administration done? We have specifically established institutions to provide that kind of mentoring, to ensure we are able to give that leg-up which is necessary.

Sir, not only that, the Honourable Member for St. John should know – and he did acknowledge it but tried to play down its importance – that gaining access to finance has been a nightmare for a number of business persons in Barbados. Therefore, the very clear and deliberate action on the part of the Government during the last several years, has created a number of financing mechanisms: the Enterprise Growth Fund; FUND Access; the Industrial Investment and Employment Fund; the Agro-Development Fund; the Tourism Loan Fund; the Urban Development Commission Fund and the Rural Development Commission Fund. These have all been part of that strategy, along with the technical assistance and the mentoring, to ensure that we take a very clear recognition of our historical circumstances, to accept them as reality and to work to change that reality. Therefore, a creative and talented youngster from Silver Sands or Checker Hall who has great ideas and who has the willingness to succeed, will not be held back, merely because there is no one in his family to whom he could turn, in order to set up a business.

Sir, that is one of the areas in which Government's policies have sought to bridge the gap, to give equality of

opportunity to persons from different sides of the social grain in Barbados. Therefore, Sir, one would strongly disagree with the Honourable Member of St. John in his assertion that there has been no specific action taken to help black businesses in Barbados.

I also want to say that in Barbados, part of what I mentioned as being that unwillingness to deal with issues up front and to discuss difficult issues, also reflects itself in several different business areas. For example, in the United States, it is typical that whenever some one makes their first million or ten million dollars in sales, to announce that they have done well. People are happy to be seen in magazines and to be ranked amongst others. In Barbados, we do not have that. As a matter of fact, part of the difficulty we have is that only the failures are highlighted; no one ever comes and highlights the successes. Yes, we have had failures of business in Barbados, unfortunately including a number of black businesses that should have gone on into the future, for example, N. E. Wilson but we have also had successes. Unfortunately, given the almost secretive nature of our society as it relates to businesses, one would not find businesses, other than the publicly-traded ones which, by law, have to publish their statement of accounts, coming out to make any statement which concerns where they are in relation to their growth.

Therefore, Sir, I want to challenge the successful black businesses amongst us – they do not have to give us their assets down to the last year – that in spite of the difficult circumstances in which they operate, have been able to succeed. They, in my estimation, have a responsibility to come out and to assist in inspiring some other young black entrepreneurs and to let them know that they too could succeed. On the other hand, if every one claims to have been a failure, the only examples those looking on would see, would be that of failure.

Sir, the issue of reconciliation at the national level has to be approached by persons on all sides. Mention was made of the fact of the societal changes. We have seen the typical roles performed in Barbados by both blacks and whites have changed. Whilst as a youngster, I remember going into town and one would see certain positions being populated with more whites than blacks. Persons older than myself would know that a person's religion and colour were the main qualifiers for holding certain positions. Sir, the truth is, if you visit some businesses in Barbados you will still get the impression that only whites have managerial or supervisory capability, sometimes it is a shocking thing. There is one retailing establishment that I visit from time to time and it is always interesting to see the supervisory staff wearing a different uniform than the other members of staff. It would appear that the only persons with the talent and the ability in this particular establishment appears to be white. I do not

know what the criterion is but it just appears that way to me, from someone looking on.
3.55 p.m.

I am saying that we need to ensure that at the level of the enterprise, we practise this matter of reconciliation. I would want to see more whites come into the public service, an area which they have literally abandoned, so that they would feel that they can fully participate, the same way that I would want to see more blacks participate in areas in which they have not traditionally participated. In other words, I believe that national reconciliation will truly be achieved when all shades and complexion or persons of whatever origin in our society will not think it above or beneath them to serve at all levels and give public service in one form or another, whether it is paid public service, by working for the Government, or otherwise, is an important aspect of that service.

Mr. Speaker, the work of this Committee on National Reconciliation is a start. It is an ongoing process. The Government has been using the recommendations which have been made as one of the inputs into policy. We are satisfied that the issues of critical importance to our development, race, religions and otherwise, have been fully ventilated and recommendations set forth.

It is really for us, who are charged with the responsibility of leadership to take this process to its logical conclusion. I am pleased with the recommendations.

Sir, I want to say specifically that we now have to continue to ensure that we make as much progress in our economic arrangement, the economic democratisation of Barbados, and ensure that development in that sphere keeps pace with the rapid political progress that was made in the post-1937 period, with the social progress that was made alongside and look forward to a society in the future in which all would fully participate.

In closing, I want to say that we need to use the opportunity which we have today to ensure that Barbadians throughout the diaspora are fully involved in all aspects of national development. The opportunity was given some encouragement by the Returning Nationals programme, put in place by this Administration, but even above and beyond that for those persons who may not be actually in the process of returning to Barbados but who might be making valuable contributions wherever they reside in the world, the opportunity is there for us to use information technology to ensure they participate fully.

I was very pleased to note that most of the radio stations in Barbados are now on the internet and persons from the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany

listen to the call-in programmes in Barbados. They not only listen, they call in as well. I am pleased to note when I travel overseas and I meet with Barbadian communities, many of them are on top of our news by reading the daily newspapers on the internet. I believe that as more intensive use is made of information technology in our governance, we can have a more active participation by all Barbadians, whether they are in Barbados or not, participating in our democracy.

Sir, the ability to use modern information technology to enhance democracy and to ensure that Barbadians throughout the diaspora are involved, I believe is one of the important steps forward and one of the means of ensuring that one aspect of national reconciliation of the relationship between Barbadians at home and abroad would take us further forward.

I want to commend the members of the Committee for excellent work. The two volumes of the Report have made for excellent reading. I too share the view that there is more to be done, and, therefore, the individual arms within Government will, from time to time, adopt and implement various policies. With that I want to pledge my fullest support for this Resolution.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this Resolution and to put a different view to what I heard. Sir, one must ask oneself the question, a reconciliation of what? We cannot continue, after 300 years, to blame the whites for not allowing us to have the economic power. We are a Government dominated by all black people and we have what it takes to make sure that our people have the opportunity to get what is needed.

Sir, the vital point is, we must first teach our people how to live among each other. We cannot continue to see people as providers and at the same time not receivers. You cannot expect a person to continue to provide for you when you do not recognise that you have to help them to receive in order for them to be able to provide, that is the biggest problem facing black people and it has nothing to do with the white people.

4.05 p.m.

We must understand that as long as we continue to live like crabs in a barrel we are going to have this particular problem where one set of people believe that they must be the ones to receive but nobody must provide for the other side. I am saying that we as a people have to sort this problem for ourselves. No other race can sort it for us because we have the numbers, we have the economic powers and we must understand what we have in our hands and how to use what we have to develop our people.

I have said on many occasions in this Parliament that a lot of us were fortunate to come up in community life where we had older folks who were prepared even though they did not have the educational background that we have but they understood the importance of being in the district at the street corners under the manchineel tree and providing guidance for us. All of a sudden, Sir, a lot of us, even though we came through that channel, we have forgotten the channel we came through and we are now not giving back to society what worked well for us. We are allowing the youngsters to be out there by themselves not guided and we believe that we are now in one elevated group, all away from the youngsters and we are too "big-up" to go back to the youngsters and teach them the route to success.

Sir, if we continue to marginalise our own people, Barbados is not going to get better. It is going to get worse. People who are professionals and believe they cannot deal with the farmers, the fishermen, the vendors, the house servants, they are too far removed to use the knowledge they have to show those people how to come together as one community and go forward in the interest of Barbados.

Sir, you do not necessarily have to be a fisherman or go fishing to understand how to help a fisherman solve a particular problem. We must understand that we have to be our brother's keepers and that we must be there to guide, protect and show them how coming together as a body makes society much stronger. That is why I have always said and I will continue to say that we have not fully exploited the credit union movement and we need to. We have to understand that that is something that is ours and that will empower our people but we cannot just see the credit union as where the masses of people put money in a credit union, draw it off to buy a car, house or piece of land. We must now come together and understand that the credit union movement must be a movement that allows people to come together and understand that there are other projects that can bring greater returns and as a body the same people who invest in the credit union movement can come together in another body, draw some of their funds, use the capacity to increase that capital base and develop something for themselves.

But what do we want? We want to make sure that everything we have is for ourselves and we try hard to keep the ones from behind us from getting closer. We need now to start seeing the ladder without a bottom rung. We need to see the ladder with bare top rungs for the simple reason it is not us pushing down each other but we need to see something called unity and we need to see something called pulling along other people.

The problem in this country is that there are people who believe that once they have gotten something that they

must distance themselves from people and keep others away from it as if they were the only ones blessed and ordained by God to get that particular right. This society needs some more biblical training and it must understand that the great Jesus Christ came on this earth and never removed himself from the masses but he put himself among the masses to pull them along. Check and see who he went for, Sir! Fishermen! He did not go for the doctors and the lawyers, Sir. He went for the fishermen and it was the fishermen who were able to allow him to amass the people and teach them Christianity. The problem with this society is that we have not taken the biblical writings right. We have ignored them. If we go back to basics we would understand fully what we need to do to cultivate the minds of people and deliver the masses out of their sufferings.

Sir, if Barbados in 2002 does not understand what is needed to bring along people this country we will never see anything called reconciliation because, first of all, when one looks at the report the report is flawed. We believe that the only way we can reconcile the people of Barbados is by allowing the whites to come together with the blacks. Foolishness! The blacks must first learn to come together among themselves in the same way the whites did it and we must stop criticising the whites for learning how to come together as a group because that is not our problem. Our failing is that we have failed as a race to come together. As politicians, the twenty-eight of us must understand that the day we leave Parliament and we have not succeeded in that in a sense we have failed.

Mr. Speaker, I came to this Parliament and you can call me a martyr or anything but the point is that I came to this Parliament for a reason and one of the things I want to make sure occurs before I leave this Parliament is that poor people have a better understanding of themselves and they understand how they can come together as a group and amass what they need in this country. People must understand that it does not mean putting up institutions. The first process must be the educational process because if the educational process is not there no matter what system you put in place it is not going to work. Bajans must learn to appreciate each other. Bajans must stop seeing themselves as more than the other and must come to understand that they are going to bring along the other person. It is like fishermen out to sea and a boat is broken down and they go ahead and leave the other fishermen but yet say they are all fishermen. Foolishness! If a man is adrift you have to bring him in, you have to tow him in. Just because you have 10 000 flying fish you cannot only look at the 10 000 flying fish you have in the boat and leave him out there saying that somebody might see him.

Sir, I am saying that this is a very serious debate. We have lost focus. We start with good reasons and understand what we want but we approach it in the wrong direction because we, as politicians, must be frank enough to tell our

own people that we cannot continue to use slavery and all of that foolishness because we have passed that stage and we have seen ourselves where we can come to this Parliament, where we can pass laws to suit whatever we want in this Parliament. We have the control in Parliament but yet we want to continue to blame the whites when in truth and in fact when you really understand what is going on we must blame ourselves.

4.15 p.m.

I will give you an example. This week, I heard how important it is to train nurses to send them overseas. I agree. I have always said that after having the 1961 educational system put in place, I cannot understand why a country like Barbados cannot understand that its biggest resource, is people. But what is the sense sending people overseas, allowing them to amass large sums and keeping it overseas, when there is no system in place to encourage those people to bring back home the money to empower their brothers and sisters.

Sir, all of that money needs to be in the system, and that is why I will continue to make this particular point, that a man who goes outside and works hard and amasses foreign exchange, when he gets back to Barbados, he must be treated differently because that is the empowerment he is bringing for his brothers and sisters. A sacrifice has been made and a sacrifice must be given for that foreign exchange.

The same way, Sir, you are prepared to go on the market and sometimes pay between 7 per cent to 13 per cent, why should that man come back with that money, and only get 3 per cent or 4 per cent, when he is doing the country a national good.

I am saying, Sir, the only reason that might not occur is because of whom the man is and we must understand that we must continue to compensate our own when they have done well. We are afraid to compensate our own people but yet, we make all sorts of excuses to compensate people who do not have a connection to our own country. Sir, we speak about reconciliation. How can we reconcile anything when we do not allow people to even appreciate what they are doing?

Firstly, we must create an opportunity for the people of Barbados, and every single player within the economy must be made to feel that they are contributing something. We look at fishermen and we believe that they are nobodies. We look at the farmers and figure, oh, they just work in the field. We also think of the maids as nobody. This is foolishness and I am saying that we have to see every person doing a job as somebody important.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that every worker within Barbados must feel that they are contributing something to the economy of Barbados and not only the tourism experts must feel that they have something to contribute to tourism, but the bell boy, the gardener at the hotel and all of them, must recognise that they are contributing something to the upliftment of Barbados.

Sir, if we continue to believe that only certain people can contribute, then those people at the bottom will not give of their best, because they will know that they are working very hard and nobody seems to understand what they are doing. I am saying, Sir, that the new approach now, is to allow Barbadians to feel and to know that we value their contributions to the economy.

Sir, one of the reasons why agriculture is not doing as well as it should, is because we have done everything in our power to make agricultural workers believe that they are not wanted. In truth and in fact, Sir, while we are doing this, the great America is doing everything to make sure that their workers, who work in the agricultural sector are protected and treated as special people, because they understand that a country without food is not a country of any worth. Sir, I am saying that we must understand these things and be prepared.

Sir, in Barbados there was a saying that a hardworking person is a person who will be compensated. The truth is, that does not work any more, because people work hard and they are not compensated any longer for their hard work. Poor people believe that it is right, that they must work hard and they should feel good that they should have an opportunity to work hard. I am saying this is wrong. You must create an atmosphere to keep people working very hard and the people coming after them must understand the reason why the people work so hard, and they must be able to see why they work so hard. But not in Barbados, Sir, and that is why people want to know why the young people are behaving the way they are behaving. This is because the young people have watched their great grandparents work hard, and have received nothing for their hard work. Sir, that is why you have seen that particular change...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: All you have to do is talk to them and they will tell you that in Barbados now, the ones who do not work hard are the ones who get through and the ones who work very hard are the ones that do not get through.

Sir, I am saying we talk about children not wanting to take over family businesses and it is normally the first child that would not want to take over from their parents. But most

of the time, they watch and understand fully what their parents had to go through, so it is not surprising to me that kids, after watching their parents and seeing sometimes the types of sacrifices they have to make, fighting hard for a cause and it seems that the harder they fight, the deeper they are pushed in the gutter, would not want to take over from their parents.

How can we change a society like this? We must also understand that selling local produce is like selling a headache but, if you are selling imported produce, nobody would harass you because when you are selling local produce, everybody believes that you stole it, so you have a freeway to sell everything that is foreign. Let us face it. We have to understand that local produce is paramount to any other produce.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it took them to go to a consultation at Sherbourne Conference Centre to understand what was the car and what was diesel and gasoline, this weekend. All of them over there, who were saying that Kelly was talking foolishness, suddenly realised that every expert in Barbados understood quite well what Kelly was saying.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes. We need a radical change and it will happen, whether or not you do it but it has to happen.

Sir, we have to understand that adult education is good but at the end of the day, we still have to go back to the base and understand that we must first teach our people how to live in harmony, how to help each other and that one person cannot continue to help the other person, without the other person helping the other. It is a two-way street.

Sir, in Barbados it appears that there is only a one-way street now. There is no double lane, where traffic can travel in different directions anymore, everything is in one direction. If everything is in one direction, common sense dictates that somebody will hop off the boat. We have to understand that we cannot any longer be users and people have to understand that there are certain politicians, who do not care what standing they have in life, would understand their roots. The problem with most of the politicians is that most of them come from a poor family and as soon as they have gotten over, they have forgotten where they came from, they cannot associate with the masses anymore. They feel that everything they do they must talk down to the masses, as if the masses do not have common sense.

Let me tell you all something. The people with the most common sense in Barbados are the masses and sometimes we talk as if the masses do not have common sense. We make that error all the time and feel that we have to repeat these things as if they do not know what is going on. This is foolishness. What the masses in Barbados need now is a programme in place to help them get where they are going, because what they are looking for is a betterment of life.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, do not fool yourself, that is what the masses want. They ask, what is in it for me, and how can you help me with a particular programme.

Sir, this foolishness where you feel that you have all the knowledge and they do not have anything, you are fooling yourselves. It will be interesting sometimes to go in the markets and around the shops to hear the types of things that the masses are talking about, and you will be shocked.

Aside.

4.25 p.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying that the masses understand fully well what is going on in Barbados and they have made their judgement. What they need to know now is how people are going to do things differently to change the fate for them. So those people who do not listen will pay the price. Those words 'inferior and superior' are all foolishness. People believe that once you have got money you are superior and when you do not have any money you are inferior. That is foolishness. I am saying that everybody in Barbados is superior. So we must stop looking at the fishermen, the vendors and the hawkers as people that are nobodies because they are the ones who turn the economy in Barbados. They are the ones who take the fish from the fishermen and stop the country from spending foreign exchange and they are the ones who take the produce from the fields and utilise it to save foreign exchange for the country. So it is about time that we start talking about those people in that light so that they can have the particular appreciation for themselves instead of people seeing them as nobodies because at the end of the day it is the capacity to earn or save foreign exchange that is going to be important for the country.

The farmers and the hawkers are the ones who better understand globalisation. I am saying, Sir, that we must find a system to stop the vendors from believing that they are applying for something that is a sacred right. The ability to work must not be by our red tape which is the whole problem in this country. Everything in Barbados is done through red tape. We have to understand that we have to free up the system. We must allow the system to run freely and the Government must make sure that things are done in such a way that the masses can have the opportunity to get on the

boat and be able to sail on the boat. We believe that the masses must be always on the shore and that the boat must come to the shore and they cannot get on.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying, Sir, that this Resolution to take note of the report of the Committee for National Reconciliation needs to go back to the drawing board because the Committee must first understand what is needed to allow my people to be more united and how they can help each other to progress. People must understand that if we continue to look at everything as if we are on a ladder we are going to get a problem. What we need to understand is that we are all on the ground and that we all started from the same base, that we must hold hands and move forward, that people are not only providers but they must be providers and receivers at the same time, that nobody has any special rights more than anybody else and that everybody should have an opportunity to exploit their capacity and do whatever they feel like doing.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, I have been treated to a number of presentations here today addressing a topic that really demands great honesty and a degree of courage that very few persons born of woman possess.

I want first to compliment the Committee for National Reconciliation for the contribution which they have made and to compliment Parliament for having the courage after a long time in bringing this Resolution before this Honourable House.

Sir, one of the major components that give rise to the call for reconciliation is the element of race. This variable has been suppressed throughout the entire debate here today but it is the major causality that is responsible for the attempt today of finding means to reconcile the differences and the social ills that exist within our society. It takes a lot of testicles to really deal with this subject matter because when you touch on the element of race, there seems to be an innate fear in black people, especially of the elitist background in dealing with this subject matter. They are the ones defending with greater vigour than the very people who ought to have fear for a debate in relation to race. The people who have been interiorised as a consequence of history are the very people who retreat on the subject when it is supposed to be discussed. The question of race is fundamental to all that we are dealing with here today, whether it is the element of law that is derived from the contact between Europeans in the western world coming into contact with the Africans, whether it relates to capital and labour – it is white capital and black labour – or whether it comes back to education

itself which is euro-centric education because when it comes to world history it is still white world history excluding Asia and Africa.

I am sorry to hear the Honourable Member for St. Lucy attempting to be apologetic on this particular question and figure that race is...

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: We all find it difficult sometimes in understanding the convoluted logic that comes from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Sir, from the first contact in the western world we had great difficulties in establishing harmonious relationships among the people who form what is perceived as CARICOM which is a community of people of different historic background, different social values and different cultures. It is grounded in conflict, heinous crimes and very fundamental felonious criminal acts that has been justified in an institution called slavery where black people accept themselves as slaves and called themselves slaves every day simply because they were enslaved. They never say they were human beings that were enslaved, they always say they are slaves that came from Africa. So we have to address that psychological damage.

When you are dealing with this subject there are many elements that we must examine. There is no doubt that people get entangled in it because we talk about it with great fear. The people who are attempting to address it with the hope to achieve the objectives that the Committee set about to achieve are relegated in this society as roughnecks and unsophisticated in their approach to resolving the social and political ills and to addressing and readdressing the economic imbalances in the society. People who have a humanitarian spirit and can bring about the changes in the society hide under the table and refuse to come to the front and do justice to the society. Many of them are the ones who have achieved within the educational system but they condemn everything that is African. I listen to them in this House every session with great fear when they talk about the black working class. I do not like to talk about that but how else can you define it without using the term that is universally accepted by academics across the world if the world is divided into social stratification and there is a specific group of persons belonging to the lowest class in the society. They talk about black working class people and generalise us as though we are all the same. Genetically we are the same, but this society has stratified us in more than one way. There are some of us who believe we have succession rights to political power and to control political power because of family origins. These are the realities.

4.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there are people who control the economies in this country who believe that they have a right to do so. They believe that no one else should enter into the economic market. These persons have the advantage in controlling the economy because they have had a jump-start as a consequence of abusing and exploiting labour very early in the system. These things are not detailed in the Report but they touch on the issue.

I hear a lot being said to impress upon people that the BLP is responsible for the collapse of the small, black businessman. This is utter nonsense. Things occur simultaneously but this does not mean that one has to impact upon the other, nor that one is responsible for the destruction of the other. Although the BLP might be in power at this point in our history, does not mean the supermarkets that were closed were because of the existence of the BLP. Sir, we could also use that judgement against the DLP, not only in terms of black businesses collapsing but where we saw also the vendors dressed in black and marching to this House of Assembly when the DLP was in power. They walked Broad Street. I was among them. Therefore, if that is enough evidence to justify that the Party is responsible for the collapse of the vendors, or ostracising of the vendors' market, then the DLP must too be guilty. When Oliver Crumbo who led the African National Congress, the party to which Nelson Mandela belonged, wanted to come to Barbados to address the Barbadian people, the then Prime Minister of the day refused to entertain him but, at the same time, did entertain a leader from Latin America. The then Prime Minister had indicated that he was too busy to entertain him because he was too busy with a by-election in St. John.

Sir, when Mayor Tory, formerly known as Stokeley Carmichael came to Barbados, the same DLP held him under house arrest in Black Rock for the only reason that he was speaking on the behalf of black people across the world. He came back at a later date while the BLP was in power and spoke at the University of the West Indies. The DLP passed the Public Order Act in order to deny these men the opportunity to speak in public. Therefore, one cannot speak about reconciliation unless we understand that race underpins this division that we have in this society.

The situation after Emancipation has not changed. It started from the 15th Century when they made first contact in the western world, there was serious social conflict. They established principles to justify why they were superior. They rationalised the ideology that the black man had no persona, that he was not a human being but cattle when this nonsense started about Barbados whites being slaves too. Whites were not devoid of their persona. Whites had the opportunity to make the vertical mobility in which they lived. Black people were murdered and no one was charged for it.

Black people were exploited, with no pay, at a time when they were fully employed.

Sir, one hundred years after the change of 1937 did not change that. The Independence of 1966 did not change it because the problem is more fundamental than at the national root itself. It is embedded and grounded in international capitalism. It could be tackled to make gradual changes in the system in order to bring about social and political equality but one is never going to get this done easily if there is no military power in the economic equality. Sir, where military power existed, economic power also existed. When Rome had military power the economic power existed. When Spain had military power, economic power existed. When Britain had military power, economic power existed but now that America has the military power, the reality is that it dominates the world's economies.

We could make gradual adjustments in the system in order to address this situation. I am happy that within the limited flexibility in the small states, we have been able to bring our society to the standard to which we have brought it. We came to Parliament with legislation almost imposed upon us, BLP or DLP, to do it. It is not going to change overnight. We have an educational system in which one cannot even get the people in the educational system to accept that black studies is a meaningful subject. Some people believe that Kenya is located in St. Lucia and that Egypt is located in Europe. We have a black population who believes that Egypt is a European nation and there is nothing that one can do to convince them it is not, although its location can be seen on the map. People know where to find New York City, Boston, Manchester, Paris, *et cetera*. If these persons are asked to name two African leaders for \$10 million to each member of their household, the only person who they could call would be Nelson Mandela. Therefore, there are serious problems which we have to address in this reformation.

Sir, African studies is also at the core. We need to have a more broad-based approach, not only at the level of the policy of the Government but people must be prepared to work in harmony with the Government in understanding why we have to address these issues. Therefore, when we hear persons speaking about having gone to school and being taught world history, they do not even know where Asia or Africa is located. Sir, I believe one of the major calls in this exercise is the call for reformation, which is now on the international agenda.

The Attorney-General has recently attended a conference in South Africa and, according to our report, reparation was one of the major items on the agenda. It is very important for us as a people if we are going to have a sense of pride, to be able to make these calls with a certain

amount of pride and courage because we could justify why we ought to have reparation. Nobody has ever taken away any lands from any white person and, therefore, that is a myopic view. Sir, Dudley Thompson is an outstanding attorney from the Caribbean who was involved in the struggle in a practical sense during the deliberation struggle in Kenya, with Jomo Kenyatta, when the Kikuyu ethnic group fought to reclaim the land from the British colonial borrowers. Jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned as a result of that struggle. Sir, Dudley Thompson was one of the leading professional attorneys among the legal team fighting and defending Jomo Kenyatta in that struggle.

4.45 p.m.

Sir, the group that had a justifiable reason to be involved in the struggle in reclaiming the lands, we were told that they were called the 'Mau Mau Gang'.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, anybody that appeared to be dishonourable, involved in criminal activity and they were any collective bodies, they were branded as the 'Mau Mau Gang'. The 'Mau Mau Gang' is credible liberation movement in Africa, fight to reclaim the lands of Kenya.

Sir, Dudley Thompson still remains in the forefront of the call for reparation to be received by the Jews from the Nazis as a consequence of the acts of Adolf Hitler. There are other people who received reparation but whenever black people make the call or attempt to discuss the matter, it is distorted to make people believe that we are going to a white man's place and confiscate the man's assets and share them. It is unfortunate that we reduce everything to such a level.

I believe that in addressing this matter and in order to reconcile it and move it beyond printed words, it is going to call for a lot of courage. The person who is responsible for achieving the reconciliation must be very clear on what their role is. If we could receive reparation, we would not have to go cap in hand asking anybody for aid, asking for money to build a hospital or school.

Sir, the countries to whom we go for assistance are the very countries that plundered the resources of the Caribbean and Africa and built up their riches as a consequence of undermining and underdeveloping these countries. They are indebted to us and if we call for justice, it must be predicated on the fact that they raped the lands in the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and Africa in order to become extremely wealthy.

Sir, they are now flaunting their wealth, achievement and technology and get intellectuals to justify all the things that they do as being noble, and get Caribbean intellectuals,

parrots, to sing the same songs and make us believe that they are doing something honourable and that we should follow the same path.

Sir, this is the reason we are now trapped into this thing called globalisation.

Sir, we have not fully escaped the restoration of poverty. They are trying to find all types of strategies and methods in order to sustain the achievements which they have had over the last few years. I am not going to condemn the Leaders of any of the two political Parties in this regard, because both administrations, in my view, made genuine attempts to change things but they could only go as far as the people allowed them to go.

Sir, when the progressive Governments in the Caribbean attempted to make radical changes, because of the social and political economic ills in the system, those Governments became victims of the same people who plundered and raped the soil of the Caribbean.

Sir, the Jamaican Government folded up under the leadership of Michael Manley, they bust-up the Grenada Revolution, they created all types of problems in Guyana and any Government that appears to be anti-colonial is a Government that is unlikely to survive. They dumped the same capital that they acquired, through crime, on the same political Party and move the political Party out of office in order to protect their own economic interest.

Sir, they not only protect the students at the university in Grenada or any American interest in the region, they find a justifiable reason to ensure that the administration who appears not to be supportive to get rid of it, these are the harsh realities.

Mr. Speaker, to reduce this Debate to a level of simplicity, as some Honourable Members have reduced it, this matter is a greater challenge than the superficial thoughts which were expressed by those persons. I hope that we attempt to address the dehumanisation of the black race and we can only reconcile if black people can feel a sense of equality and we can feel that we are part of the mainstream of the economy. We can only achieve the ultimate goals if these elements of virtue are respected by all people across the society.

Sir, this calls for us to reflect on another debate which was held in this Chamber sometime ago, when the diversity of our cultures are not respected by all groups then we still have social conflict. When one culture is relegated to an inferior culture and another one to a superior culture, then we still have serious problems in the society.

Mr. Speaker, when the African religion is perceived as 'Voodoo' and the western Christian religion is respected in society, then we have a problem. Sir, when the Spiritual Baptist Church is respected the same way as the Catholic Church and Anglican Church is respected by the entire society, then we know that we are arriving at the goals that we ought to achieve.

Sir, we are still in a state of confusion and unclear on what our objectives are. We can only understand it if we arm ourselves with the education and information why it is a passionate call and why we have to put our lives on the line, sometime our political future on the line and state things as they are. Everybody cannot get this done because we have to pamper all different types of people.

Sir, when you are in political office and you want the economy to remain at a certain level because we must have jobs and when the election time comes the persons that you did not pamper, you then have to shift to those people.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: So, we have to manoeuvre to survive in these small states. It is part of our culture. They were always clever, especially Barbadians. From the days of slavery we had to be clever so that is why we were called 'smart'. We had to be clever to survive. While other men escaped into the mountains of Jamaica, Haiti and Grenada, Barbadians on flat land with little space to hide played smart and very early in our history, the so-called slave was given the freedom to roam from one plantation to the other in order to meet his girlfriend at night without the master's guidance. We also had the freedom on the abolition of the slave trade by saying yes, we agreed with the slave trade. Do you know why? Because we were reproducing enough slaves to ship to the entire Caribbean. Economic interest again. Not because we had any humanitarian principles and wanted to get rid of the slave trade. We could afford to support the abolition of the slave trade because we were producing enough slaves. We were doing a lot of reproduction in Barbados among the slaves.

4.55 p.m.

I support all that we are doing and compliment those who worked in order to produce this document and respect the Members of Parliament who debated this matter today. I want to say that the next step is a plan of action to achieve the goals that are recommended in the report. Thank you very much.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that further consideration of this Resolution be deferred.

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

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

ORDER NO. 8 – SECOND READING OF THE TREASURY BILLS AND TAX CERTIFICATES (AMEND- MENT) BILL, 2002

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move this short amendment to this legislation. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, this move is really to introduce an element of e-commerce to enable information technology to be utilised in the process of the auction and sale of Treasury Bills.

As you know, Sir, this procedure, like many others, is conducted on a manual basis. Many of the procedures established in the civil service and in the wider government have not kept pace with the times and this is one of them. As you know, Sir, during the 1970s the Central Bank took over the management of the register for debentures, Treasury Notes and savings bonds. In terms of Treasury Bills and tax refund certificates, those are administered by the Accountant General and by way of the procedure these matters are kept note of in the manual system.

What is being proposed is that the central securities depository which is an information technology platform used by the Securities Exchange of Barbados to manage the trade in shares of public companies in Barbados will be used to settle these matters. This is really just a technical and procedural matter. What will happen in this regard, Sir, is that when auctions are up for Treasury Bills, the issue, redemption, trading and processing of Treasury Bills will be done electronically.

The Accountant General and a quasi tenders committee will still administer the allocation so that the authorised dealers and brokers and certain agents who are able to get into the computer system will be able to enter their requests via computer. Others who are not so fortunate can still place their manual orders with the Accountant General's office.

At the time of the auction the option will be explored by the Accountant General and others. For example, Sir, one of the principles that we use is that the computer system will be programmed that their small tenders are received but at a competitive interest rate. They will be given preference over large orders to make sure that there is no automatic advantage given to large orders over small and things of that nature. Essentially, in order to allow for electronic processing of these Treasury Bills, amendments to legislation had to be made such as would accept electronic signatures and allow the Minister to choose an institution and in this case the Minister has chosen that the Securities Depository of the Securities Exchange would be the institution.

It recognises the fact that the Government had earlier on passed the Electronic Transactions Act which basically sets out the minimum standards which would allow an electronic transaction to have the full recognition and full weight of law as if it were done by traditional paper-based means.

The specific amendments as in the amending Bill are meant to achieve that. The other change is that there has been a rationalisation of the penalty for the offence. Previously, the offence for altering or forging Treasury Bills or Tax Certificates was imprisonment for life which is in excess. Therefore, the opportunity has been taken to reduce that to a fine of up to \$50 000 or imprisonment for up to 14 years. Those represent the very simple amendments which are being made to this legislation to allow Government to use modern means, modern information technology to process the issue, the processing and the redemption of Treasury Bills and Tax Certificates.

With that simple explanation of the amendments, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I beg to second that.

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

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is in Committee.

Clauses 1, 2, 3-6, 7-9 were called and passed.

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

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. G. A. CLARKE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Treasury Bills and Tax Certificate (Amendment) Act, 2002.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government Business for the day and I beg to move that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, August 13, 2002 at 11.00 o'clock in the morning.

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

The question that this Honourable House be now adjourned until Tuesday, August 13, 2002 at 11.00 o'clock in the morning was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
5.10 p.m.

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PRESCOD, Mr. T. A. (St. Michael East)
THOMPSON, Mr. D. J. H. (St. John)