
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 1999 – 2003

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Honourable House is resumed. When the Suspension was taken, this Honourable House was in Committee of Supply. To that it will now revert.

Mr. Speaker left the Chair and Mr. D. CARTER resumed the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister made many important points yesterday but I want to elaborate on one point. The Honourable Prime Minister said that many economists, indeed, many Governments worldwide have been guilty during tight economic times of setting interest rates high.

Mr. Speaker, that statement reminded me of the period of the Democratic Labour Party misrule of 1991 to 1993 when a number of monetary and fiscal policies, not well thought out, were inflicted on Barbadians. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that even before 1991, some persons had developed the thesis that when foreign reserves are under pressure there should be high interest rates for exchange control orders and credit squeezes. Nobody in this Honourable House is unmindful of credit squeezes being imposed during hard times in Barbados.

The Barbados Labour Party's position has never been inconsistent even though it would have been true that there was something of a credit squeeze in a previous Barbados Labour Party Administration of 1981 to 1986, but that too would have to be put in its proper context.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall yesterday that the Honourable Prime Minister said that where there is a lot of liquidity in a banking system, commercial institutions should be more prepared to lend for productive purposes rather than mere consumption. The credit squeeze the Barbados Labour Party had imposed between 1981 and 1986 left out the productive sectors but was a defensive mechanism designed to put the damper on consumption while not doing anything to interfere with the productive sectors, in such a way that consumption threatened to run wild with the concomitant impact on the foreign reserves. This great Administration decided to introduce not just a credit squeeze but a regime along the line of monetary policy where, for example, when certain items were being purchased purely for consumption, the conditions under which they could be acquired on hire purchase required a larger down payment. Also, certain conditions were applied so that it would not impact negatively on the foreign reserves.

The Honourable Prime Minister was saying yesterday that if your economy is going through strain, your national output is not increasing and your economy is sluggish the worst thing that could happen would be to make it more expensive to get money. Mr. Speaker, I will explain that point if you permit me to make a comparison between our policies and the policies of the Democratic Labour Party between 1991 and 1994 when they last occupied office.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question of the fact that Barbados' economy is an open one meaning that imports are usually higher than exports. Even when we say this, we still have to be careful because if imports are constituted of technology and raw materials then they would not have the same deleterious effects as imports used purely for consumption. Even then, in the context of what we are doing here in this economic debate, we have to be careful to segment particular policies where they should be properly segmented and then proceed.

The point the Honourable Prime Minister was making was that if the economy is performing sluggishly and if the productive sectors lack stimuli, then the worst thing would be to raise interest rates so high as to make the cost of getting money high and prohibitive which would mean that if the cost of obtaining money for tourism, manufacturing, agriculture and other services is prohibitively high then clearly, those sectors would not be able to access money easily. In a situation like that where the national output is not increasing, to further inflict high interest rates on a sluggish economy would likely push it further back and put it in recession. This reminds me of the furious fiscal and monetary policies which the Democratic Labour Party practised in this country between 1991 and 1993.

Mr. Speaker, I will first speak of the fiscal side. Honourable Members in here would remember the famous stabilisation tax. There must also be Honourable Members in this House that would remember the Election in 1991. Before that Election, the Barbados Labour Party was maintaining an argument that the economy was under siege, the productive sectors were not performing and that economic crisis was looming ahead. This was December 1990 to January 1991.

The Democratic Labour Party, under a former Honourable Member for St. Michael South, insisted that we did not have it so good and told the people in January 1991 that all was well under them. When they won the Election, having told the people all was well, they came to this Honourable House three times and each time they further increased taxation. This is a Democratic Labour Party which is today saying that there is too much taxation in Barbados.

The records of this Honourable House will show that in 1991 there were three massive doses of taxation inflicted on this country designed as a defensive economic regime to protect the foreign reserves and designed to ensure that a damper was put on spending, but they were not well thought out.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time on the monetary side, you found that between 1991 and 1993 the Democratic Labour Party increased the liquidity reserve ratio. The liquidity reserve ratio is the total amount of deposits that commercial banks are required to place with the Central Bank, thereby taking money out of the economy.

In normal times, before 1990, the liquidity reserves lingered between 21 per cent and 22 per cent but in 1991, they increased it greater than the norm thereby taking money out of the economy and causing the economy to contract. Sir, it did not end there. They also increased interest rates, the opposite to what the Honourable Prime Minister was encouraging yesterday.

The economy was sluggish and behaving in a poor way and rather than find stimulation for the economy, they found some type of mechanism that put a sluggish economy further into a state of slumbering sleep. You found at that time that the productive sectors like manufacturing and agriculture went down so low that it would have taken a long time to bring them out. Generally speaking, all the productive sectors declined. Mr. Speaker, what we have done now is to evaluate precisely where the economy is at.

Mr. Speaker, there was an admission yesterday that the period 2001 to 2002 was not characterised by growth but was characterised by something of an economic decline. Sir, even when there is an economic decline there is no need for panic. If the extent of the decline is not substantial, there is no need for panic. When we talk about economic decline, we have to be careful because it is customary to measure economic performance in terms of increase in the country's performance as far as the national income is concerned.

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Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, what is being said and being admitted, that there was no increase in national income or national output. Generally speaking, from a theoretical perspective, the total volume of goods and services traded and the total amount of receipts coming in did not increase. Amazingly, Mr. Speaker, the foreign services did not appear to be severely impacted on. In the context of the economic history of Barbados, wherever in the past there has been a decline in national income, accompanied by recess, there has always been, prior to 2001, a decline in the foreign reserves.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time there was no marked decline in employment. Indeed, today the level of unemployment is low compared with what has been the norm. Prior to 1998, many Barbadians would have been satisfied, not the Members on this side. There was an unemployment rate of 10 or 11 per cent. They were those who fatalistically resigned themselves to the fact that in developed countries, an unemployment rate of 4 per cent is acceptable and that in developing and under-developed countries, an unemployment of 10 or 11 per cent, taking into account the high population and size of the country, would be acceptable.

This great Party, Mr. Speaker, has been able to get unemployment below double digit figures. I am not satisfied that enough of our Honourable Members on this side have been able to take it to the people. I am not happy that we on this side have been unable to properly explain

this wonder outstanding economic feat. Today, Mr. Speaker, unemployment is still below double digit figures.

At the same time, even though we are admitting that there was a small economic decline, where was the level of investor confidence? That too must be taken as a perimeter when measuring the economic tide. There was a time in Barbados that once there was a signal of a recession, investors panicked and would look elsewhere. Today the level of investor confidence remains high.

There was a time, in my existence, Mr. Speaker, where there was a recession, not the one of 1981 or 1991, but the one of 1973. This recession was not only accompanied by pressure on the foreign reserves and a decline in employment, but was also accompanied by massive levels of inflation. Where is the inflation in all of this in the year 2002? I am saying that notwithstanding the fact that the economy did not perform to the level of expectation that any Barbadian would have wanted, at the same time the economy has still been able to show signs of resilience and signs of strength in all of this.

Yesterday reference was made to the importance of our human resources. I think that every Honourable Member on this side understands what the Government is doing is developing an overall national strategic plan within which there will be a human resource strategic plan. We have to continue to treasure our social capital and human resources as the principal resources that we have in this country. In doing so, we must be mindful of the threats to human resources.

Sir, successive administrations have always placed a high premium on education. Education is being singled out as one of the principal ways by which we can equip our people and train them to take on the responsibility of developing this country. We have diversified the range of educational products. We have seen normal academic education increase in the last 41 years. We have also seen, through the efforts of previous Governments, attempts being made to provide more technical education.

There is no question if one looks closely at the syllabus or the curriculum of Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic that one would see that there are many skills which are being made available to Barbadians to equip them to develop this country.

The Barbados Labour Party, to its eternal credit, would also have been responsible for introducing the Barbados Training Board. This Training Board has a mandate which is unique to it, where the emphasis is on apprenticeship and on the job training people to prepare them for the labour market and bid for work.

We can say that successive Governments have been determined to do their utmost to equip our people to be ready in terms of academic and other education for the world of work. However, even though education is a necessary component in developing human resources, the question is, is it by itself a sufficient thing unto itself? In a situation where there are threats to our human resources, we will have to conclude that education as important as it is, is not all.

There are threats to our human resources. What are these threats? There is the threat of HIV/AIDS. The scourge of drugs is often linked with HIV. There is a culture of fatalistically thinking that schools and training institutions are there without people sufficiently appreciative of them. I am not going to try to set back the clock by urging that Members of this Honourable House support any system in which we force people to pay fees for education. What I would say is, that in the context of our social endeavour and development, we now have to get our people to develop that sense of urgency and importance on education and training.

There was a time in Barbados when the typical Barbadian parent and child looked forward to an education and wanted to achieve that education to avoid failure. Unfortunately now, there are too many persons who take education for granted. There are too many people who set out to go to school, apparently unclear as to why they are going, and there are some people who seem not to be teachable.

Mr. Speaker, right now there are five or six rural secondary schools where you will see children at this hour disembark the bus at a bus stop close to their schools. Instead of walking in the direction of the schools, they walk in the opposite direction of the schools and waste time for another two hours before sauntering into school. This suggests that something is amiss with our attitudes.

There are those children who go to school and leave school and do not remember the names of 75 per cent of their teachers. Sir, what level of interaction can there be between those who provide education and those who receive education if we have reached a stage where children do not bother to know the name of their teacher?

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Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Therefore, in the context of our addressing our human resources, the urgent need to do something about what educators call the "affective domain" is to do with attitudes, if we are going to preserve and protect our human resources, if we are going to fight the scourge of AIDS, the scourge of alcoholism and the

scourge of drug dependency. We also have to realise that a culture of complacency has hit the home where many a parent is not sufficiently keen to try to transmit the correct attitude to their offspring to tell them how to approach school.

We have also, Mr. Speaker, to try to determine the extent to which the apparent wealth that is being seen in Barbados has a strange, hypnotic effect on those who want to partake in the wealth but who seem to feel that it is there for the taking and the asking and you just reach out a hand and it comes there. There would have been Barbadians over the years, over the '30s, the '40s, the '50s the '60s and the '70s who were determined not to fail, who were determined to get education and training.

Too many of our youngsters are falling by the wayside. It would not have been a good thing when those Honourable Members who were here in 1995 heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East saying that in excess of 70 per cent of secondary school children were going to school and leaving school without any certification. Beyond the question of failure to receive certification, is this. Are we in this culture seeing our children drift into school, operate in a state of anomie there, drift further and then pick up negative attitudes and come out into society with these negative attitudes that do not lend themselves to nation building?

In the context of development of our human resources, we have to look at the threats to our human resources and the threats beyond HIV, the threats beyond alcoholism and drugs. We have to get to the root of the problem. There is no question that the vast majority of children who are not receiving certificates are intelligent people. Therefore, there must be some sort of investigation why a person who is ordinarily intelligent does not bother to set about to acquire an education. Many of those boys on the block who seem to be moving away from established norms are highly intelligent. The question that must be asked is when and where and how did we lose them. Are they necessarily the victims of poor parenting? Are they the victims of a school culture that did not nip their problems early in the bud? Is it really true that 75 per cent of them never went to a Sunday School? What are these threats?

Mr. Speaker, in the context of lifting our people up, in the context of practising the adage that "each one matters", we have to go to the root of the problem, and the challenge is for the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East as it is, indeed, for other people in here. The question is, what are all of the threats to our human resources? What will happen if we do not arrest these threats and how can we avert these threats and how in a situation where there are people in Barbados who are definitely doing well and others who are not doing well, what do we do to lift those up who are not doing well?

It is not a good feeling to talk to eight young boys on the block and when you talk to them in a group you get resistance and when you single them out one by one, each person on a one-to-one basis is a totally different person from when he is on the block with his peers. Some of those boys when they come to us as individuals we can make a hand of, but give them that group solidarity they experience on the block, together they resist and deviate from norms and seem totally resigned and fatalistic about the affairs of this world.

Mr. Speaker, even when we come to the stage where we identify the threats to our human resources in an era of trade liberalization and globalization, we have to tell even those Barbadians who are doing well of the need to see education and training as ongoing. I repeat that. Even for those of us who are apparently doing well in an era when efficiency in the workplace, efficiency in the factory and when the question of the survival of the fittest and the best comes up, those of us who have done reasonably well still have to try to work out where we can improve and where we can go on to even higher heights.

I therefore urge, Mr. Speaker - and I trust that we can come to the Head of Education some time - all Barbadians to see education and training as ongoing, as never-ending. It grieves when I hear a fellow in the final year at the Community College or in the final year at the University of the West Indies saying, "this work is so hard at Community College and at University that when I quit and get my degree I do not even want to read a traffic sign nor a Nation". I have heard people say so in Barbados, people who believe that a B.A. or an Associate degree is a passport to success suddenly just as they are about to get it say the pressure of studying is so severe they do not want to study again. That attitude has to stop.

Indeed, if we are going to be humane in all this, we may have to find out if indeed the institutions exposing them to learning are pressuring them into that type of resignation and fatalistic attitude. If it so happens that tertiary level institutions are turning off their graduates and are not stimulating people to love learning, then we have to re-look how we deliver teaching and the extent to which people enjoy learning and the extent to which they are turned off by learning. All these are things which we can take the opportunity this week to examine.

I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by commending these Estimates to this Honourable House. There is no question that there is nothing in the Estimates to suggest that the Estimates are holding estimates. What are holding estimates? Holding estimates are those estimates that the Democratic Labour Party brought to this Parliament in 1991 in my time, 1992 in my time, and 1993, and to some extent 1994, where they just voted money and one or two years the deficit was so astronomically high, high ad Astra,

especially between 1992 and 1993, that all the measures like layoffs, like eight per cent salary cuts, like high interest rates, those panic desperation measures that Barbadians are accustomed to experience through the Democratic Labour Party, had been inflicted on our people. Not so with any of the Estimates this Honourable Parliament has had the opportunity of approving ahead of today. Not so with these estimates whose approval I would definitely commend.

Mr. Speaker, in the context of where our productive sectors are going there is no question that the Estimates are clearly and cleverly placed on an anvil which will trigger development and growth and I, as I said already, heartily and wholeheartedly commend them to every Honourable Member of this distinguished and august House. I thank you.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to lend my voice to this Estimates of 2002-03 in this Chamber on behalf of the many constituents of St. Michael North West who would want to hear, not only accept the fact, that as far as this present Government is concerned, under the leadership of the Right Honourable Prime Minister, we have seen tremendous growth and a much better understanding of people in relation to the way a country should run.

It is extremely important for us to look back, as I am known for, and anyone of us who has had the benefit of elementary education would understand that the basics of education is your time table.

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Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: If we do not understand what 2 plus 2 means, something is wrong. Mr. Speaker, if you clearly understand that 4 from 6 leaves 2, then it is obvious that somewhere along the line, we could understand how the economy has been going to the betterment of all of us. When we look back at what the foreign reserves of this country were, as far back as 1991 to 1993, we would realise that the average Barbadian was living in crisis and that was a serious situation.

Sir, between the period of 1991 and 1993, the average Barbadian was not sure what the next stage was likely to unfold for them. Those of us who were working at various institutions across Barbados, statutory boards and within Government institutions, relate to the fact that there was a serious salary cut where most people found it difficult to maintain their families, including paying mortgages. Some even had difficulty paying for the simple transportation they owned, which took us to and from work. This transport was not used for luxury, as some are being used today. So, because of the economy at that time,

there was a situation where people were faced with a possibility of:

1. Properties being sold for not being able to pay our mortgages.
2. Cars being repossessed for not being able to pay our car loans.
3. Those bailiffs who worked for the various firms in Bridgetown in relation to higher purchase, wrecked havoc in repossessing the very simple little table model gas stove that was probably one of the cheapest of the stove lines because those persons, between 1991 and 1993 found it extremely difficult to pay those simple little debts.

Sir, we should have followed the advice of a former member of this Chamber who is now on the Other Side in the Other Place. He is what we, in Barbados, call the economy guru, who feels within himself that he is probably a person whom this country can depend on to move it forward.

Sir, between the years of 1991, 1992 and 1993, he was the principal advisor to the Government. What did we experience? Mr. Speaker, we experienced not only the hardship of some of the things that I have just mentioned, but we also experienced the situation where, in this little island of ours, Barbados, people who had a little savings in the banks had to resort to drawing off those savings for survival.

Mr. Speaker, last week I read that the domestic savings in the savings banks in Barbados have run into millions of dollars. When I talk of domestic savings, I mean the savings of the average person and that goes to show you that the Barbadian of today has become extremely confident in the way the economy of Barbados is being managed today by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, from 1994 to this year, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, as we go on, one must understand that when we look carefully at the youth of this country - and I am sure that the Honourable Member for James North spoke about it earlier and that is education. Mr. Speaker, you will know well because you sit in the Chair sometimes at an institution in Barbados so you know the importance of education in Barbados. You also know very well that many Barbadians today have seen education as the priority for survival in this country, again, under the leadership of the Prime Minister the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, because it provides the opportunity for them to prove that they have an interest in the affairs of this country.

Mr. Speaker, you talked about the foreign reserves not only of the improvement over the years because I have

heard the Honourable Members on the Other Side going about Barbados and telling people that this Government does too much borrowing. Sir, that is the programme of their platforms and also the programme on the call-in programmes and those are some of the things they are known to be saying.

Mr. Speaker, you could only borrow if you have a good credit rating. You could only borrow, if by right you have paid back what you have borrowed. Today we can, hopefully, say that between the period 1991 and 1993, the credit rating of the former Government was not strong enough because they were advised by someone who, in truth and in fact, seems not to understand how a Government is managed, but knows how an individual operates.

Sir, no one should believe within himself that they have the right answers for anyone. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say today that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, we have not seen any selfish approach to the running of this country. We have instead seen the involvement of the trade unions, commerce and the manufacturers. Therefore, several people are involved in the exercise of running this country.

The Opposition seems to think that the affairs of this country rest on one person's shoulder and that person has the answers to a better Barbados. We have seen, as I have said before, that it cannot work and it will not work. Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for us at this time in our parliamentary life, because when you have to answer the statements made by the Opposition, it is a waste of time to answer to those statements because they do not have any weight. It is a cloud. Today you see it and tomorrow it is gone and you have to be very careful.

Mr. Speaker, in the last by-election in St. Thomas, we heard that there was going to be a tremendous layoff in Barbados, people would be out of jobs and there would be more vagrants on the roads in Barbados. They painted such a gloomy picture of Barbados that people had to ask themselves if they are really living in this country. Sir, this Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, did not allow that to happen.

Sir, I am going to advise all Barbadians to drive around Barbados if they want to see the development and the progress of this country. Look at the several houses that are being constructed, the people who own those homes and the people who live in those homes and you will see progress. You will see one or two cars and that could only happen if a country is moving forward.

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Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: The Democratic Labour Party made the comment that there will be massive layoffs in the country but between 1994 and today there has been tremendous improvement as far as employment is concerned which moved from an unemployment rate of 26 per cent down to nine per cent as it is at present, and I am sure that through the initiatives we have been receiving in this Parliament under the leadership of the Right Honourable Prime Minister to move the economy forward, that within the next couple of months we will reduce unemployment further. Sir, one does not have to be a mathematician to take nine from 26 to realise that there is a great difference.

As far as the former member of this Parliament who is now in the Other Place is concerned, one must understand fully that in terms of dealing...

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: It is obvious that he will remain in the Other Place, if selected again.

It is extremely important to improve the living standards of our people. Today, the average Barbadian is making an attempt to own their own home. The first thing young Barbadians who are just starting to work think of is owning their own home because they want to be part of the country which they have been brought up in, educated in and in which they intend to live. This is unlike the 1991 to 1993 period when many Barbadians migrated because they were scared of what was happening in Barbados at that time.

Barbadians could not face the music at that time because the music was out of tune but today there is a lot of harmony, chords and chorus in the music. As far as a cappella is concerned, there is harmony in what is going on in this country today. The voices are blending now and because the voices are blending you can expect to hear sweet sounding music in your ears. This is what the Right Honourable Prime Minister has been doing for this country over the last eight years.

During the period 1991 to 1993 members of the Democratic Labour Party walked about this country telling Barbadians that they do not have any rights to land like if Barbadians do not understand that they can go to the Land Registry and investigate and know the truth. Nothing can hide in this country and there is nothing that Barbadians who want to know will not know.

Between the period 1991 to 1993, people who bought land found it difficult to repay the land loans and they had to turn around and sell the same piece of land that

they had seen as something to move them forward or to pass on to another family member. Many families suffered during the period 1991 to 1993 because they had to rid themselves of things that would have been beneficial to their families at a later date. Today, Mr. Speaker, Barbadians are buying land and they are shopping in the classified ads for land as if they are shopping at one of the major discount stores in Bridgetown. That is because Barbadians are feeling extremely comfortable and safe that the economy of this country is in the right hands. Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for anyone not to relate to what has happened in this country over the last couple of years. Regardless of how much opponent one is of this Government, and of the various Ministers in this Government, it is difficult for anyone not to relate to the fact that every single member on this side is hardworking and dedicated and has been delivering the goods. Our Leader makes it possible for us to deliver because he provides a programme and gives us the initiatives in these Estimates to work toward a better Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud at this time to be in this Chamber...

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: I will continue because I realise that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has sat there and listened very attentively to what I have been saying over the last couple of minutes. Sir, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy can relate to what I am saying because he understands what I am saying because he is a grassroots man like me, but he is being unfair to himself because there are things he would like to say that he cannot say from that end.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that I might be falling into his own trap, but I want to make it known that nobody dictates what I say, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, years ago governments use to talk about thousands of dollars, then they moved to millions and now they are talking about billions. Sir, the Barbados economy is moving forward. With proper management over the years Barbados has developed and moved forward.

Sir, we, on this side and Barbadians in general are extremely confident that this country is being managed properly which enables us to do the things we are doing at the present moment. We have to provide better roads for Barbadians based on the fact that Barbadians are driving a

better standard of cars so the roads have got to be good and we must find the money to provide them.

As far as education is concerned, it pleases my heart when I come out of Speightstown every afternoon, and I am sure the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would admit to this, to see the students of the Alexandra School taking home their laptop computers to further educate themselves. That is what progress is all about.

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Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, that is what that is all about, to be able to bring your people along with you as you develop, to be able to make people understand that they are part of the development. You cannot blame the next person. It is not an individual game when it comes to Government. No wonder there are so many problems on the Other Side. No wonder there is so much disharmony on the Other Side.

It is a worrying situation when there is so much disharmony because one has to ask oneself what is happening in this country. If you fight in a house that is not united, then it must be divided. That is not so on this side and the reason why we can stay in this Chamber and be able to put the case and prove to Barbadians that we are working in their interest, let them give us a chance to get the things done and they will be done. Aside.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Well, when we get to Social Transformation, I am going to be in my glebe because it is obvious when we come to the improvement of St. Michael North West, the constituency of which I represent, when I am hearing that I am going to have a community centre with a computer lab, can you imagine that. When I am hearing that I am going to have lights on all of the playing fields in St. Michael North West lit so that games can be played at nights. I am proud to say that, for the first time in the history of Barbados, we have seen games being played by nights and that is what I consider to be development. This Government sees the need for developing the minds of young people. Sir, I heard the Member of St. James North talked about the men on the block. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you and can sanction this. The minds of the men on the block are not what people think it is. The minds of the men on the block are just like anyone of us in this Chamber. They want to make a contribution to a better Barbados.

Sir, some of us do not see it as that but one must go on the block and listen to them. Sometimes they say things that surprise you. They have to say those things because a lot of us spend time listening to what they would want for Barbados and this Government has been providing it. This Government has been assisting the minds of young people

in Barbados in developing what I consider to be a plan, not only for themselves but also for their children and their children's children. A Government that looks ahead, a Government that spends ahead, a Government that plans ahead, then it is obvious that down the road, those offsprings of many of us across Barbados will truly benefit from what has been done as far as the Estimates of 2002 to 2003.

Sir, we talked about sugar. Times have changed. There are certain children in this country who would not want to do what their parents have done, and we must understand that clearly. This Government must prepare the road for them. We have to be able to be in a position to make sure that whatever is happening at the world level that Barbados, by right, should be part of that.

Sir, it is only now when we can read any of the financial papers around the world that are written by gurus and read that this country of which I have been raised in, is rated at number 5 or 10. One has to understand what that means. Some Barbadians, like those on the Other Side, must stop preaching doom and gloom. They must be honest to themselves and say that they have taken the Government from 1961 to a particular period and it has worked for them. It has stopped working for us between a particular period and the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Government has taken it forward. Sir, now they are seeing the period between 1994 and 1999, do not oppose for the sake of opposing. Be honest to yourselves and to the people and say, "Look, we cannot wrong this Government on the performance of some of the things they have done because they have done them correctly and we must come with solutions". Where are the solutions? None whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud. I think at this time I will give way to other speakers but I am sure, as this Estimate debate goes before this Chamber, there will be several other things to which I will have to lend my voice. I am extremely happy this morning that I am a Barbadian, and I am hoping that everyone of us who are Barbadians will continue to be proud of the fact that under this Government everyone of us can say openly, "I am a proud Bajan." I thank you.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this great privilege; my first opportunity to participate in this Estimates Debate in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the people of St. Thomas for this privilege. If it were not for them and the confidence they have bestowed in me and, indeed, in the Barbados Labour Party, I would not have been here this morning. Therefore, I want to speak, not only on their behalf but on the behalf of the people of Barbados. I want also to laud the performance of our astute Leader, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter who, in his presentation

yesterday morning, has been able to restore a higher level of confidence in the people of Barbados. His performance is outstanding and, indeed, with the team here on this side, I am sure we can continue to carry out that mandate that has been set for us by the people of Barbados to deliver the goods.

Mr. Speaker, these Estimates serve as a continuation of many of the programmes and projects that were set within the last number of years, as well as the startup of new projects because, as you know, life is a continuing exercise and therefore we cannot afford to be stagnated. There are always new things to be done if we are to prepare ourselves and our people to be on the cutting edge. Therefore, these Estimates I will not see as a ceremonial exercise, as the Honourable Member for St. John said yesterday, but as an integral part of the people of Barbados being made aware of the plans and programmes of this Government. Therefore, we will stick to what we know is right because it is the people's rights that they be told, and be consulted with, and that the goods we deliver to them are in as timely a manner as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts of this Government should be lauded because of the stabilisation and the confidence that it has put, not only in locals but, indeed, in the regional and international market when it comes to the economy. We must also look at our people and the training that is necessary for them to continue to be a force to reckon with in the rest of the world. We hear a lot about globalization and if we are to train our people as we have for many years, not only to serve us locally but also in the regional and international markets, then we must continue to focus on the human resource development, as was mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. James North and others in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that we must work harder at attitudinal development. It cannot start with adults in the public sector, but we must work within the households, the schools, churches and community groups in preparing our people to develop good attitudes towards getting along with each other, having good work ethics; getting to school and to work early.

These things are significant if later in life we are to expose our people to getting to work early and producing. Therefore I support all those other comments that were made by other speakers regarding attitudinal development of our people. It is not enough for us to offer them the free education or to pay for the education but, thereafter, the biggest chunk of money has to be spent towards helping them to develop good attitudes. It is my believe that when the Government offices or the private sector offer services that every individual who calls on the phone or visits an office must be accorded respect. We are getting a lot of difficulties from human resource management and people

interfacing with others at a level that makes them feel comfortable and want to carry on a conversation or even carry on business in those areas. I think that is one of the emphases that should be taking place now in our country. We have the skills, the knowledge but the attitudinal development needs to be beefed up in almost every area.

Mr. Speaker, last year and again early this year, this Government consulted with the people; town hall meetings, internal meetings, consultative meetings and discussed issues that will impact on our growth and development as a people. Sir, there are repairs and maintenance to houses of the poor, senior citizens and others to offer them waterborne toilets, the Urban Development Commission that has been doing exceptional good work. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we cannot stop there but must continue to deliver the goods to the people. Their taxes help to go towards the payment of our salaries and our resources but there are some people below the poverty line who, for one reason or other, are not able to contribute at the level to which they would love to.

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Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Therefore, it is this Government's duty to ensure that every individual in this country receives benefits, and the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission are doing exceptional work in this area.

Sir, millions of dollars are being pumped into the HIV/AIDS Programme. We all know that during 1996 under the great leadership of the former Minister of Health, pregnant women were given AZT free of cost. This Government is going to ensure that persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS are given AZT as well. We have also moved beyond pregnant mothers and we are giving AZT to other persons in the country as well as we are also making provision to train people who work with HIV/AIDS, diabetes and cancer and other forms of illness that will impact on us as human beings.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I want to make reference to the network services offering counselling to workers in the public sector to help them fit into the work place and be able to produce.

Mr. Speaker, the EduTech Programme does not only call for refurbishing the school and providing computers, but it calls for training of teachers, educational officers and others in the educational sector to make sure that the delivery of the programme is not only appropriate, but culturally relevant to the needs of our people.

Mr. Speaker, there are grants and subventions for hotels, small businesses, community groups and individuals as well. That is significant because if our hotels are to function at a level for our tourism sector to develop, and if private schools are to continue to function and offer high quality education, then Government has to offer subventions to them.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of this Government for the community research centres to be set up across this island. Indeed, the Honourable Member for St. John spoke about the one in his constituency. I am glad that he can stand boldly in this Honourable Chamber to speak of plans which the Government has for St. John because the people of St. John pay taxes and they deserve roads, a resource centre and housing development. Mr. Speaker, we on this side and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy made an important and interesting point on the growth and development of all Barbadians.

I agree with the Honourable Member for St. John that proper systems have to be put in place to ensure that the community centres are opened on time to serve the needs of those who use the technology. This Government cares so much for the people of Barbados that it brings the technology to the masses.

Mr. Speaker, we know there is technology in almost every sphere of the country but it has to reach us in the homes as well so that we can be on the cutting edge.

Mr. Speaker, this Government must be applauded for bringing the unemployment rate down to 9.8 per cent. I shudder when I hear the Honourable Members on the Other Side speak because I know that between 1991 and 1994 Barbadians lost confidence in the then Administration. There were layoffs by the thousands and a structural adjustment package was put in place that made us afraid to exist in this country. We started to look at other countries in the Caribbean which went down the road of structural adjustment. Thank God, today the Barbados Labour Party has been able, through its programmes, policies, astute leader and the dynamic team on this side to be able to put Barbados on the map of the region and international so that investor and local confidence has been restored.

Mr. Speaker, I feel happy today to be a Barbadian and be part of the team that delivers the goods to the people of Barbados. In 1993 we could not speak with this confidence. It is amazing that some Honourable Members on the Other Side were the major architects in designing the programmes that helped to push Barbados down the gutter.

Mr. Speaker, so many people are working today that it is difficult to find a maid or gardener during the week and maids and gardeners are doing two jobs. I heard the

Honourable Member for St. Lucy speak about police officers not being given the opportunity to be as productive as they should be, but when they work eight hours they are tired and we need the police officers to be alert when they are carrying out their duties. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would not want to be associated with those kinds of comments.

We want our people to be multi-talented but, at the same time, we want them to give an honest day's work for the money they receive. It is not always the money but a lot has to do with contentment and knowing that you have done a good job and helped to make people safe in the environment in which they live and work.

Sir, I want to touch on another initiative that this Government is working towards through these Estimates. It is the first time in 40 years that there has been major expansion at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We all know of the conditions at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and we know of the challenges this Administration and the workers have been faced with over the years. Therefore, the expansion of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital must happen if we are to cater to the health of our people.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has continued to serve us well and these Estimates speak to that. These Estimates are not in any way ceremonial but are a part of proper planning if we are to be effective in the delivery of our services.

11.10 a.m.

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HON. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the confidence that the people have put in this Government. I want to say that the people of St. Thomas are happy for this Government to continue to serve them well. The people of St. Thomas are also aware that this Government continues to provide high quality service. The people of St. Thomas have also benefited from the programmes that have been provided by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Thomas are very happy and we look forward to more of the services being delivered to us as a result of this great exercise that we are undergoing today and the remainder of this week.

The Rural Development Commission is currently working on the concrete roads and one is being built at Grand View. We are aware that everything cannot be done at the same time but the pie is being distributed across this country. Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Thomas are happy and I know that those people living in Jackson will get theirs next year, God willing. We will speak to that later, Mr. Speaker.

House repairs have been done and the asbestos roofs have been removed from all the houses except one house in Bagatelle as a result of the National Housing Corporation. Sir, it amazes me how the Members of the Opposition talk about the small black man and the masses and what the masses should have when the masses were never in their plans.

Mr. Speaker, everybody wants streets lights and they deserve street lights. The Rural Development Commission is servicing the parish of St. Thomas and other parishes across Barbados. We need street lights to see to get around to do our chores.

I want to add to what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West said. He made mention of the students of Alexandra. We can also praise this Government for the primary school students. The students of Sharon Primary School have laptop computers. These computers are not taken home to play games but laptop computers are used as teaching aids for their homework. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for that assistance given to the students at Sharon Primary School.

Many people do not talk about the important work the National Sports Council does. They have installed lights across this country to facilitate the needs of young people after hours so that they can play the various games like basketball and netball to help them burn up the excess energy they have. Sir, once they are on the playing field they do not have the inclination to do anything that is negative.

I also thank the National Sports Council for the lights that were installed at Content, St. Thomas, which were switched on last week. The residents are making wise use of their time at that location, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Social Transformation Department and the National Assistance Board for the repairs that were carried out, Sir. I can only speak to the parish of St. Thomas at this time. Ramps are being built for those disabled persons in St. Thomas to enable them to get into their homes without any difficulty. It rains almost every day in St. Thomas and it hurts me when persons have to be exiting their homes to go into the backyard to use the facilities out there.

The Social Transformation Department and the Rural Development Commission have been helping persons to access waterborne facilities attached to their houses and that is what I call growth and development under this great Administration. Waivers have been offered to students for school books, school fees, petty fees and bursaries for private schools. Some parents are unable to meet the expense of such fees because of their economic situation. The Government is ensuring that people are not

placed in an embarrassing position. Information is discretely passed on to the relevant authorities about such situations. Persons who are in need must benefit as a result of the policies and programmes of this Government.

I want to speak to the Community Resource Centres. I want to laud the efforts of the Community Development Department for identifying Bridgefield pavilion to chose as a community resource centre. I am sure that the residents of Bridgefield, Grand View, Cane Garden and all surrounding areas of St. Thomas will be very happy to be able to use that facility. Mr. Speaker, we are very cultural as well. Members of the community will take the responsibility to ensure that the equipment is secure and proper signatures put in place so that the centre is always adequately supervised.

There is currently a system in place at the Lester Vaughan School where the residents of the community ensure that when the pavilion is in use that it is properly supervised. The watchmen, teachers or the principals are not responsible for looking after the Centre. The residents of the community come together and look after such matters. This is what we need to do if we are talking about community life. We have to make people responsible for their actions and the facilities they use in order to help them grow from strength to strength.

I want to say that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has vision, ability and dedication for the cause of all Barbadians. The Honourable Member is supported by a team on this side. They too have the capacity to ensure that the needs of all Barbadians are met. We will not ask this side, as was asked by another Administration, what we will cut this year? We are going to ask, what things are we going to expand this year? These Estimates speak to the expansion. We have allocated more money for the HIV/AIDS programme, the expansion of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the road works across Barbados.

We will not ask what we will cut. We have no reason to cut anything. The only thing we will want to cut at this stage, and we are working assiduously at doing it, is the unemployment to make it lower. We want the people in Barbados to be gainfully employed so that they can make a contribution to the growth and development of this country. That is what we will expand, Mr. Speaker.

11.20 a.m.

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Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: We will not ask to know who are our friends from our enemies, Mr. Speaker. All the people in Barbados we consider to be our friends. They gave us the mandate and we are here to serve them at every level and to serve them with distinction because we consult

with them on the issues that matter and the issues that will help to develop their own interest and their welfare. Therefore, we know that we are the Party of choice and the people of choice on this side because the people know that we have the capacity to deliver the goods to them.

We will not ask anybody to like it or lump it. We would ask them to like it, because we know that the people of Barbados like these policies and these programmes. They feel comfortable living in a country that is safer than most across the world. They feel comfortable that democracy reigns; that education is free; that they can go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to get their treatment and their medication and to do all the various things that are to be done there.

We know that there are pockets of grievances that will be dealt with. Rome was not built in a day, Mr. Speaker. We know that people will have grievances and sometimes when you give them all the goods they still have grievances anyhow. If you dig up the roads, everybody grumbles; but when it is a nice new nylon road, everybody wants to walk or drive on it. We know that we will get challenges of that sort, but it is in the interest of this Government to ensure that the people like what is being done for them and they are working hand in hand with us and with the various persons in the Ministries across this country to be able to meet the needs of all Barbadians.

The Ministry of Housing is playing its part, and while it may not be able to establish all of the housing that it has on its plan, I am confident that the people of Barbados, the upper class, the middle class and the working class will get the opportunity to own their homes, to be able to rent a facility to help them to raise their children in a comfortable environment. It cannot all happen at the same time, but I challenge those on the Other Side to tell us how many houses they built in the eight-year period so that Barbadians could feel comfortable living and owning a piece of this rock.

When the Government changed, they could not tell you how much money could be paid per month to live in one of those houses in the Church Village area of St. Philip. This Government has a totally different approach and attitude towards housing development in this country, and I feel confident that more people will benefit as time goes on. Now it is not only the Government that will be doing the construction, but Government will be doing it in association with the private sector to ensure that the private sector continues to be able to inject part of the skills and expertise that it has, to ensure that we reach people across the length and breadth of this country.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to say that I lend my wholehearted support to these Estimates. I know the Government is not only interested in the poor or the rich

but it has an overall interest in the white, the black, the young, the aged, the disabled across this country. The interest of the people are at the heart of this Government. These Estimates are about the future. These Estimates are about stability in this country. These Estimates are about developing further employment. These Estimates are about making people feel safe in the environments where they work and live. These Estimates, overall, are about living a good quality life in this Barbados. It is the motto of our great Party - A Better Life For Our People. These Estimates are helping to point our people to be able to receive a better life as a result of the policies and programmes of this great Government.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, and as the discussions move on, I would want to make my further contribution. I thank you.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate on the Appropriation Bill, 2002. As is customary, just like the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, I could not have done this without the support of the good people of St. Philip South and it is to them that I say thanks.

Mr. Speaker, we need to look at the contextual framework in which these Estimates were geared, and the Honourable Member for St. Peter gave us a very good picture yesterday in this regard. He was very clear in pointing out that Government has major objectives which in the fullness of time we would want to realise. Some of these objectives are long-term in nature and some are short-term in nature.

The major long-term objective which the Prime Minister reminded us of yesterday is to move the Barbadian economy from a developing society to a developed one within the first decade of the 21st century. One could argue that the Honourable Prime Minister is being very optimistic but we need to be optimistic when we are convinced on this side that this is a long-term objective which is very much achievable.

Mr. Speaker, such an objective requires sound macro-economic policies and certainly a policy agenda that is characterised by some measure of dynamic consistency. However, it does not mean that we should follow extremely closely any rules-based policy to macro-economic policy formulation. Given the uncertainties that exist in the regional and international economies, we have to be very mindful of the fact that from time to time we need to step in and promote and, indeed, formulate policies where the policy is to bring the economy back on track. This is where we are today, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister also made the important point that in a highly uncertain, economic environment the odds

for sustained economic prosperity will be short. We, being very mindful of this fact, are very conscious that it is important for us to monitor closely the performance of the economy and stand ready to provide the requisite economic stimuli to re-engineer and restructure certain productive structures of the economy.

Let us turn now to the short-term objectives. These were also outlined quite clearly yesterday by the Minister of Finance, but this Honourable Chamber and, indeed, those outside who are listening to us must be reminded of these things because these set the stage for the structure of the Estimates and all of us on this side have the responsibility to make sure that the public at large is informed and becomes very aware of what we intend to do and why it is we could set out on such a journey. In respect of the short-term objectives, the main one is to restore the economy to a path of growth in the shortest possible time. That is a noble objective.

One of the things we have to do is to examine the fundamental economic indicators to convince ourselves and all of those on whose behalf we are functioning that the state of affairs in the economy at this point in time will allow us with a proper implementation of the proposed programmes to restore this economy to a path of growth.

The fundamental question is whether the major economic indicators tell us forcibly that we can achieve increasing levels of economic prosperity. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East detailed these indicators just as the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. What are these major economic indicators which will determine whether or not we can move forward? An important indicator of macro-economic performance in small, open, developing economies is the level of foreign reserves and they are extremely strong. Indeed, the Prime Minister mentioned yesterday that despite the slowdown in the economy last year foreign reserves net of borrowing increased by \$150 million. Honourable Members on the Other Side and their chief economic spokesman would give us the impression that the only way the foreign reserves in Barbados would increase was if they were buttressed by borrowing.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: The absolute level of these foreign reserves, Mr. Speaker, is at a staggering \$1.5 billion. Once again and in a period of an economic downturn, the unemployment rate at December 21, 2001 was below double digits and it stood at 9.8 per cent. There have been increased levels of savings in the financial institutions. Indeed, during the course of last year, savings increased by a staggering \$400 million.

The liquidity position in the financial system and the financial system remains extremely healthy. We had a very proactive approach to monetary policy formulation. The Honourable Member for St. George North was just reminding me of the movements in the interest rates in the right direction during the course of the last year and this proactive policy was designed to keep the interest cost reasonably low, which is an important element of cost to businesses.

We have also seen reasonably low levels for energy prices, this is by our standards, and this is another important element of cost to businesses. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we welcome further reductions in cost in this area but it is our anticipation that with the reforms in the telecommunication sector, we will see some reduction in the cost of doing business in this area.

Mr. Speaker, I do not need to go on about the review of the Barbados economy for last year, to inform this side and certainly members on the Other Side, or those who are outside listening to us, that the economic fundamentals are in place to allow us a proper implementation of creative macro economic policies in order for this economy to be restored to its growth path. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy will agree with me.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that the stage is set for growth to be restored in this economy. We have managed the economy properly in the face of international recession and with proper implementation of the programmes for the productive sectors, we should see a turn around in macro economic performance.

Mr. Speaker, achieving the objective which I mentioned earlier, that is, the overriding long-term objective is not an easy task. One of the things the Prime Minister has been able to do in an attempt to have us realise that objective is to insist that a national strategic plan, covering a ten-year period, be prepared. Meticulous planning has gone into the preparation of this strategic plan. There was a time when we used to call it a development plan. We have moved away from that development plan and we are dealing with a strategic plan.

Mr. Courtney Blackman was contracted to do the initial work in this area. The productive sectors, and indeed all sectors, have contributed to the formulation of the draft of this National Strategic Plan and this will set out in detail, the short-term, medium-term and the longer-term objectives for all the sectors in Barbados - be it foreign exchange using or foreign exchange generating - but a clear plan of action for all sectors will be put together.

Mr. Speaker, what we are also mindful of in the preparation of this National Strategic Plan is that in areas where there are clear linkages, or the possibility exists for

clear linkages, that the plan speaks to maximising the potential which exists from those linkages.

I have been informed by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East that this very important document which charts the course for this economy for the next ten years, will be ready in draft, in the not too distant future. We hope to be able to share with all Barbadians the draft of that national strategic plan for the next 10 years as early as April of this year.

Mr. Speaker, this economy is at a stage now where we need to focus on reform. I do not have to mention why it is important for us to do this. It has now become clear to all and sundry that we cannot continue doing business as we have done over the last many years, if we are to compete in a fiercely competitive, regional and international economy.

We recognise that if Barbados is to be repositioned to take its rightful place in the regional economy, the hemispheric economy and the international economy, there must be a clear order of priorities to provide the right engines of growth for this economy. Sir, these Estimates speak to just that, for the Prime Minister has identified those sectors which would lead the charge for our recovery. Sir, just as he did on August 8, 2001 in this Honourable Chamber when we brought an economic statement here, where particular attention was placed on the productive sectors, once again, he has identified those productive sectors and areas which require urgent attention.

In respect of the focus of reform, the point was made yesterday that there must be reform in the international business sector. We need to take advantage of what we have been able to achieve from our fight with the OECD and move with haste. The planning for the underwriting of business in this sector must be done in a very meticulous fashion, because it is a very competitive area. We have the able offices here and the Prime Minister has made it very clear that funds will be made available to this sector in increasing amounts, in order for us to achieve some measure of success.

Quite recently, the Minister of Finance met with members of the private sector on this matter and there is a clear understanding of the strategy which has to be adopted, in order for us to see more and more businesses underwritten in this area. Sir, \$2 million will be made available for the marketing of this sector in the financial year 2002-2003.

Mr. Speaker, particular attention must be given to the tourism sector and the Prime Minister must be commended for making an additional \$7 million available to the Barbados Tourism Association for its marketing and promotion programme. Quite unlike what the Honourable

Member for St. John said yesterday, in seeking to give the Barbadians the impression that the Prime Minister is continuing to promote some type of unconstructive growth in this economy, the empirical evidence, especially in more recent times, does not bear his claim.

11.40 a.m.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: In the Financial and Economic Statement of August 08, 2001 emphasis was placed on the manufacturing and the agricultural sectors while at the same time recognising the strategic importance that tourism and international business play at this time. During the course of the next financial year we will be seeking to recapitalize both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

Also in the Economic and Financial Statement of August 2001 mention was made of the establishment of a number of funds which could be used for the re-tooling and the re-capitalization of these sectors. These numerous Funds include the Agricultural Development Fund which should be fully operational in the not too distant future. All the administrative work has been completed, a management committee has been established and it is our anticipation that the Fund should be making disbursements within the next month or so. We have a \$25 million Employment and Investment Fund for manufacturing, the Innovation Fund, the Small Hotels Fund and the Tourism Fund.

During the course of the next financial year we need to unlock the gate for these funds which should see capacity being built in both the manufacturing and the agricultural sectors and a modernisation of the practises and the employment of updated modes of operations so as to increase the level of competitiveness in these two sectors.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is geared to create the most enabling environment for businesses to flourish and to provide an enabling environment for the restructuring and the re-engineering of businesses but for success to be achieved in those areas what is ultimately required, beyond what Government is doing, is that senior government officials who have to look after the administrative arrangements will have to work to ensure that there is a smooth operation of these funds and they will have to work more assiduously to make sure that these funds are of tremendous benefit to those who are intended to benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the beneficiaries of these funds must understand why Government is making these funds available and they have to take themselves through the necessary change of attitude and understand that there must be a different approach to business. The unions in Barbados

have come around to recognising that importance and have acknowledged that they have a very important role to play in the implementation of the different strategies within businesses like creating a new business culture.

The Trinidadians have been able to introduce a totally different approach to entrepreneurial development for their manufacturing sector and it has given them the opportunity to gain the competitive edge in the area of manufacturing and trading within the CARICOM region. So we, Mr. Speaker, be it in manufacturing, be it in tourism or be it in agriculture, have to convince ourselves that it is vitally important that if the private sector is to prevail in a seriously competitive regional environment that there must be a different approach to business but in order to create this new type of business culture all players must play their part. So apart from the Government providing the necessary financial assistance there must be a conscious effort on the part of managers of financial institutions to channel large amounts of the accumulated financial savings into investment activity. The economists calls this the transformation process. So the rate at which financial savings is transformed into productive activity has to be enhanced.

The Prime Minister said yesterday that more of the funds that are lying in our financial system should go towards building investments opportunities as opposed to funding consumption activity.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the Estimates now I recognised that one of the things that will take this country forward and which happens to be that thing that has brought us to this point of prosperity is the building of social capital. Mention was also made yesterday of heavier investment in the education and health.

We have said, and that is no secret, Mr. Speaker, that there is a very positive relationship between investment in human capital and the promotion of economic growth. There is a theory of economic growth called the endogenous growth theory. One of the major proponents of that is Professor Paul Romer who has done some excellent work and has shown very clearly, and a lot has been written since his pioneering work, that investment in education and in human capital does translate into higher levels of growth.

Mr. Speaker, we have had the benefit of our own Sir George Alleyne coming to Barbados last year and giving us a public lecture on the relationship between investment in health and economic growth. So no amount of money which is planned for investment in health should be denied because there is unmistakable evidence that there is an empirical link between health and productivity. So this administration has recognised the importance of a healthy population in these Estimates. Mr. Speaker, we must accept

that one of our major productive resources would be our people and we have to make sure they are healthy. That is why this administration is to be commended for the assault that it is launching on the AIDS pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, what is required at this point in time is not the channelling of large amounts of money into the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that on August 8, 2001 the Financial and Economic Statement that was presented to this House was dominated by policies and programmes for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. It spoke to creating domestic market opportunities in an expanded fashion for our farmers. It spoke to the establishment of the Agricultural Development Fund. It spoke to modernising the incentive structure at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. It spoke to increasing the level of training for farmers.

11.50 a.m.

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Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, in most recent times, the Government has made a clear statement in respect of the radical reforms which are necessary for the sugar industry. Sir, I maintain that as this country continues to focus heavily on tourism, there is absolutely no reason why it is that we, in the agricultural sector, cannot benefit in a stronger fashion from the potential linkages that exist between tourism and agriculture. Sir, it is that on which I would want to spend a few moments just to mention that I have had a very detailed discussion with the new Director-General of the Inter-American Institute of Cooperation and Agriculture, our own Dr. Athlee Brathwaite, and this is important. There is need for the establishment of an agro-tourism centre in the region and they have also explored the possibility of having that sector developed in Barbados. We see the importance of a strengthening and enhancing opportunity between agriculture and tourism, not only at the domestic level but this is a concept we think should be regionalised and are working towards that...

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: They are not going to send it in St. Lucy but then again, the important thing is that we want it formally established because it signals to the agricultural planners and to the others in the sector that a body that functions at the hemispheric level as important as International Tax and Investment Association (ITIA) is willing to contribute in a very material way in strengthening this linkage between agriculture and tourism.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, as loose as he is in his delivery in this Honourable

Chamber, recognises that it is important the agricultural sector be dragged along with the tourism sector.

Mr. Speaker, I must revisit something that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said yesterday and it has to do with the fact that the small business sector was crushed last year and that this Government has not been doing enough in promoting that. Mr. Speaker, I know that the Honourable Member...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am not in the habit of interrupting Honourable Members but I think the Honourable Member is misleading the House by saying I said that small businesses were crushed last year. I did not say that. What I said was that the Prime Minister, in his delivery, was at pains to point out that even though the economy did well, on many occasions he had to find incentives to create that atmosphere for the small business. I said that seeing the Prime Minister had to spend so much attention mentioning it, it is clear that the top-down policy is not working and that we should put the bottom-up policy. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will understand that.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Honourable Member did clarify that point. All that it means is that this Administration, very skilfully led by the Prime Minister, understands that the small business sector...

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: That speaks to the development of that sector. It is not true to say that we have not been extending our arms to the small business sector to help them to see this type of growth. For example, we had numerous pockets of funding that were specifically earmarked for the small business sector and funds to be accessed, e.g. in the case of the Rural Development Commission, there is a Rural Enterprise Fund. This Fund has been in operation for sometime now and no fewer than...

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Those funds have been extended to the tune of \$3.4 million. We have the Small Hotels Fund and there are numerous other funds available to small businesses. Also, the Government's programmes are such that the small business sector, more so now than ever before, has been getting an opportunity to participate in Government's programmes.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two minutes to wind up.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: It is on a lower scale now than at any stage before and I do not want to tell you what has

happen to small businesses, medium size businesses, during the period 1991 to 1994; that is well known. Honourable Members on that side have been very careful to remind this Honourable House what happened to that class of business persons, that is not the case any longer...

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Sir, but I must remind this Honourable Chamber that the applications listed by the Rural Development Commission, of course, with the backing of the Cabinet, was to decentralize training by the small business sector in this country. This programme has been extremely successful to date because one of the things that we want to ensure is that the businesses not only get started through the provision of such funding, but that these business flourish and indeed survive. Therefore, we had to decentralise our approach to training in the small business sector. There are no fewer than 80 centres in Barbados which have been identified for this training. This training is done in a very coherent fashion, in collaboration with the Small Business Association.

The Small Business Association is providing the human resource personnel to the delivery of this training, whereas the Rural Development Commission will be providing the funding and working closely with the Small Business Association in identifying those persons who should benefit from this. We have been promoting this for the Small Business development and we will continue to promote that sector.

Mr. Speaker, I know that my time will soon run out but it would be remiss of me if I did not, on behalf of the people of St. Philip South, acknowledge that one of the things this Government intends to do is to ensure that a sharing mechanism be devised which will allow all Barbadians to benefit from this. Yes, the country has moved forward economically in the last eight years but the economic benefit has been distributed in such a way that one can see it with the naked eye in the constituency of St. Philip South, St. Lucy and in every other constituency.

Sir, one of the things that convinced me I should be involved in elective politics was the types of social programmes this BLP has seen fit to embark on since the Honourable Prime Minister took over the rein of Government. I am extremely happy I took that decision. The constituents of St. Philip South have seen the benefit of enlightened, social progress and we will continue to give our full support to anything else.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think we have heard you by now.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I am obliged to you, Sir.

12:00 noon

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James North.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, like all Honourable Members who spoke before me, it would be remiss of me if I did not thank the members of my constituency for their kindness in securing my seat in this Chamber and my opportunity to speak in this debate but, more particularly, to participate in the development of Barbados at this very critical juncture in our history.

It is a fact that Barbados is struggling with regional, local and international challenges at this time, some of which are unprecedented in the historical development of the world. Issues like globalization, for instance, for a small island developing state will present us simultaneously with myriad challenges and myriad opportunities to redesign our economy to meet the new international marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, the Estimates laid before this Chamber will enjoy the focus of our attention over the course of the next few days and are designed to look and respond to challenges locally, regionally and internationally which the Barbados economy and social environment are confronted with to ensure that Barbadians continue to enjoy and improve the quality of life, and that there is no retrogression of the progress we have seen to date. Other members spoke about the increase in national crime, improvement in investor confidence, the growth in the economy resulting partly from a new attitude and the view that Barbados is doing well and will continue to do well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on some other issues. It is true that we are currently enjoying an unprecedented national building boom in Barbados both the commercial and residential sectors. We are at this time enjoying the lowest unemployment ever recorded.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: It is a fact that employment has moved from 9.3 per cent, the lowest ever on record, to 9.8 per cent but overall, the unemployment figure is lower than it has ever been. The markers of consumer spending that are indicators of the extent to which there is investment, growth and capital spending in the economy are indicating that there is tremendous growth in the economy and, despite the recent constraints and slow down, the economy remains very liquid.

Sir, 10 years ago Barbados had 43 000 vehicles on the road and by 2000 that figure had grown to 73 000 with 57 000 of that number being motorcars. Between 2000 and 2001, the number of vehicles on the road rose from 73 000 to 96 000. Sir, this is a clear indicator that people have the

kind of income which allows them to go out and purchase what is regarded by many as a luxury item.

Mr. Speaker, I was stunned by the statistics which came to my attention when I chaired the Planning and Priorities Committee last Friday and I want to share them with this Honourable Chamber.

In the United States of America, the richest economy in the world in which cars are manufactured, the ratio of cars to persons is 1.8; in the United Kingdom the figure is 3.3; in Ireland it is 5.0; in Japan, another major international economy where cars are made, the figure is 4.2; and in Barbados, a small economy like ours, the figure is 3.5. It is higher than the figure in Japan or Ireland and it is on par with the United Kingdom.

This is an indicator of the kind of affluence we are seeing in Barbados. In fact, we are in danger of being the victim of our own proper management and success because the international financial institutions are saying that Barbados is so affluent an economy that we have overcome a lot of the basic infrastructural development which Latin America, Africa and other Caribbean countries are struggling to see emerge in their economies.

In Barbados we take for granted a pipe borne water system and that we have 98 per cent literacy, whereas other countries with resources far greater than ours marvel at what we have been able to accomplish. The international institutions are now saying that we do not need and cannot get concessionary funding because we are too well off but they are not taking into account the fact that unless we are able to access certain types of funding and continue to get our hands on developmental financing, the gains we have made could be eroded, that this economy is still vulnerable because of our small size and dependence on the vagaries of the international economy and, given where we are located geographically, while it has not happened for a long time, a hurricane or extreme weather system can turn up at any time and wipe out all the economic gains which we now enjoy.

Sir, the reality is that Barbados is doing relatively well. I know that the Minister of Housing plans to follow me and I had statistics on housing to supplement my argument but I will leave this for him to present.

Sir, we continue to do well, to be favoured by God and the international investors and this is a reflection of what is happening in tourism. Despite the crisis levels precipitated by the events of September 11th last year, the Barbados tourism product is doing the best of all other island in the Caribbean and at this time we have a 70 per cent occupancy level. Ordinarily at this time we would have had 80 or 90 per cent occupancy so we are down from our normal figures, but many of the Caribbean economies

are struggling at 35 and 45 per cent occupancy. We continue to do very well and in tourism, we are the foremost revenue earner in the Caribbean.

Sir, we have been able to fight off the blacklisting of the OECD. The Prime Minister travelled to the meetings with the OECD but now today we are seeing the benefits of it. While other countries remain blacklisted, we have been taken off the OECD blacklist, therefore, allowing our economy and financial services sector to be recognised international as a clean jurisdiction and one competence for investment by persons who are not criminally intent.

12.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: While we see that there are constraints and a slowdown in the economy, let us not accept the argument of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) when they say that there was a mismanagement of the economy. The international economy, the economies of the United States, Japan and Europe, the major driving economies of the world, were in slowdown and recession prior to September 11th. The slowdown and the recession were exacerbated by the events of September 11th.

Sir, we also experienced prior to September 11th, as a result of being so dependant on the international economy, a slowdown in our own economy but we continue to hold our own and to do relatively well despite the constraints. This is to be commended especially given the gravity of the situation which we face.

I wish to attempt to locate the role of the Ministry of Physical Development and Environment in our overall national growth and development and to speak from a policy perspective. I expect that when we get to that Head, I will speak to it in more detail. I want to give some broad policy picture of how the Ministry of Physical Development and Environment is located in the growth that this Government hopes to continue to bring to the Barbados economy and the upward social mobility which we hope to continue to give to the people of Barbados.

First of all, the Town and Country Planning Department is critical to the development of Barbados. It is critical because that department acts as a catalyst of and a catalyst for the Government. We have the first and primary oversight of every building and investment application which is dependent on construction that comes into Barbados and is made to the Government.

Sir, every piece of land that is to be cut up, to be subdivided, every major hotel or company that is to be constructed, or any major development project, the applications must first be seen by the Ministry of Physical

Development and Environment either at the level of the Town and Country Planning Department or at the level of the Public Investment Unit.

The Town and Country Planning Department has a responsibility to guarantee investment and to allow a number of investment and development applications of projects to be processed in a timely way and to keep the economy going. It also has the responsibility to keep the economic engine turning over to ensure that projects guaranteed continuing growth and employment, continue to provide opportunities for Barbadians to invest and provide opportunities for growth.

Sir, all of that is part of our role. It is not only the physical oversight but I must have, as Minister, consultation when planning decisions come to my desk for approval or rejections and what implications the developments would have on the long-term physical and economic growth of the country.

It is up to the Town and Country Planning Department to weigh and then determine the use of land in Barbados. We have to set out the national settlement policy. Where we will put residential growth? Where will we put commercial growth? What must be allowed to stay in agriculture? What do we want to remain pastoral and virgin lands? How do we see the future growth of the country in terms of the physical development and any corollary relationship between that physical development and investors' growth?

Sir, let me give you an example. We have a number of applications in the Town and Country Planning Department for lands that are currently designated as agricultural land. I know that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would have a peculiar interest in this. I speak to lands east of Warrens and the lands that are adjacent to Cane Garden and going further east and then going north to Vaucluse.

What I have to decide is, as Minister whose responsibility it is for physical planning in Barbados, would I wish to see an urban centre developed in Barbados beyond Warrens? If that centre were to be developed, what would be the implications for the usage of the land in terms of the current agricultural production, sugar cane and non cane crops, on the lands which they are currently on? Will there be greater economic benefits to the country overall? Will more jobs be created? Will more revenue come into the economy? Will there be greater investment opportunities for the average Barbadian? Will the country benefit as a whole if I decide that urban centre should be extended further north and east? What are the long-term implications of the decision currently before me? Do I go with the physical development plans which designate this land as agricultural land or do I do, like a Minister once

did, to determine when Sandy Lane was an agriculture plantation producing sugar to take Sandy Lane out of agricultural production rather than keeping it in sugar at a time when sugar was king?

Now that sugar is merely a little boy ...

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: That Minister had to make the decision about what would have been the implications of taking one of the primary sugar producing plantations out of sugar at the time. That Minister, thank goodness, made the decision that greater economic benefit would accrue to Barbados and it would constitute the best economic use of that land if the Sandy Lane Hotel and the residential development, which has taken place, were to be allowed. Therefore, Sir, the rest is history. Sir, there are those kinds of decisions which now come to my desk.

It is also the duty of the Town and Country Planning Department to ensure that whatever decisions that we made, that land is used in a rational way which is consistent with the cultural and social mores of the country and in a way that ensures that Barbadians continue to have access to land; that they are not being excluded from beachfront properties and that they are not marginalised in the country where their navel strings are buried. Sir, that is what I consider to be my social responsibility as the Minister responsible for planning.

Sir, in terms of the Public Investment Unit, this Unit will act, under my leadership, as a strong custodian and guardian of the public purse. It is the role of the Public Investment Unit to have oversight of all Government's capital projects and where necessary to review private sector projects and funding; that the timing of all projects is properly structured; that there is no wastage of public funds; that public projects are executed with the minimal disruption, dislocation and irritation to the public and that public projects are executed in a way that taxpayers' funds are not squandered.

12.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: At the level of Minister of Environment, it is my responsibility to ensure that the policies and programmes which this Ministry initiates will protect, preserve and enhance the country's natural, cultural and built environment. We will ensure that consideration of environmental planning is integrated into all physical planning decisions. This is critical. We see all the time where if we did not have clear, defined rules executed by the Town Planning Department that persons would build in all kinds of ad hoc and arbitrary ways, that

all coastal accesses would be blocked, that people would build right onto the beach if they could, stopping others from using the beachfront or using the beach. Remember that all beaches are public and we have indicated that all beaches must remain public.

On an earlier occasion, I spoke about beach accretion and we are hoping to bring this before Parliament because lands are accreting so rapidly at some places that property owners are extending their properties onto the accreted land, encroaching on the beaches to which the public has access. It is critical that we protect our coastal and marine resources.

Barbados is an environmentally dependent economy. In Barbados the majority of people live within half a kilometre of the coastline, all our major installations are within this major area. It is critical therefore that we develop strategies for management of our coastline and of our marine resources which will guarantee that Barbados is preserved for the use of future generations. What we are attempting to do in the Ministry is to effect that very delicate balance between exploitation of the resources which will allow for sustained economic development while, at the same time, ensuring that there is not the kind of over-exploitation of the resources which would result in environmental degradation and consequential damage to the very resources we are trying to preserve and undermine our economic growth.

Since our main revenue earner is tourism, it is important that the environment is preserved not only for the benefit of those who are born here and live here but it must be preserved in order to have the best possible tourism product to offer the many people who come and keep our economy running by the coming of visitors and tourists to our country.

We have had major challenges in attempting to control the kind of development which project proposals would seek to put in place. We have had, therefore, to introduce very stringent usage of the environmental impact assessment. Many developers resist using it, but it is a critical tool if we are to determine, especially where the project is large and complex, what is the possible social, economic or environmental fallout from a project proposal. Therefore, if we know ahead what possible fallout there is going to be, we can determine early what mitigating measures can be put in place so that there is no damage to the social, environmental or economic climate.

There are however a number of issues with which I am currently grappling as Minister of Physical Development. There is one in particular which I would wish to share with Members of this Chamber. I know it is an issue that equally would be taking the time and the

cerebration of the Minister of Agriculture. It is what is the future of sugar in Barbados. This is a critical matter.

For years, several acres in Barbados have been in sugar production. If we can no longer meet our quotas to the European Union, if the revenues from sugar are decreasing all the time and if there is little economic benefit in our continuing to grow sugar and if plantation owners, as they are saying, are deriving so little profit that they do not intend to keep the land in sugar production, what are we going to do with these lands? How much do we need to keep in non-sugar agriculture? How much land do we need to keep in sugar production if, in fact, the path we are going to be taking is the production of molasses, the production of sugar for the local market because we get the best price for sugar on the local market and, therefore, it would behove us to produce sugar for the local consumer and for local commercial consumers. If we are going to do that and then keep a certain amount to produce boutique products, molasses, organic sugar, supplies for the manufacture of rum and other spirits, then we need to know how much acreage we need to keep in production now and what are our projections for the growth in these particular boutique products for which we would need to keep land in agricultural production.

When we resolve that issue - that might be a pure agricultural issue - that leaves me as Minister of Physical Development with yet another consideration. That consideration is that if lands are not going to be in sugar production, what are we going to put on them to ensure that Barbados remains a beautiful place? There has been a benefit to Barbados in growing grass, and sugar is a grass. We know there are benefits in terms of stopping soil erosion and the rotation of the sugar crop.

Sugar canes give the country a certain orderly and beautiful look, but if we are not going to have sugar production what are we going to do with those lands? How will we plant them so that Barbados remains beautiful so that the countryside does not just become full of rab lands, bush and disorganised shrubberies that people with nefarious intent can hide themselves in and attack women? These are questions we have to determine. There are those developers who would say let us have golf courses. There are those developers who will say that they have x acres in sugar lands and they want to sell off their land. Given the price of land today, those persons would make tremendous profits, but our duty as a government is broader than meeting the narrow sectoral, proprietary and profit interest of a few. Our responsibility is to determine what is in the widest national interest and how best to use these lands if they come out of sugar production so that the benefits inure to the wide society and not to a few.

I would just wish in closing, Sir, to identify what, I think, are the major issues which Barbados has to tackle for

the future and I will do it briefly in the two minutes remaining to me. We have, at the international level, to continue the fight against neo-colonialism. It is my view, that we are seeing the institutions of the First World emerge whose responsibility it is to keep the poor countries of the world poor, to ensure that those countries which are small remain developing or become under-developed.

12.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: We are seeing these attempts in the organisations like WTO, which have virtually wiped out the Eastern Caribbean economies with bananas. We saw the OECD attempt to do it in Barbados with the financial services sector. Our financial services sector was so efficient and profitable that we were, in fact, rivalling with the financial services sectors of places like England and the First World, not in terms of dollar for dollar but per capita.

Sir, with globalisation and without the kinds of boundaries and constraints to businesses, it means that we could have accepted competition to these economic centres. Therefore, these new institutions of neo colonialism stepped in to ensure that we could not grow any further. It is what the arrangements like Cotonou are designed to do.

We have to ensure that our vulnerability as a small economy is taken into account. We must recognise that in this new world order, there will no longer be protectionism or preferential treatment. We have to prepare the Barbadian economy to meet the challenges and opportunities of globalisation and trade liberalisation. At the regional level, we have to deal with the whole issue of a common market and economy and we have to look at the issue of regional integration again.

We are seeing new relationships emerge and large trading blocs of people coming together for the purposes of trade and business, and not the love of one another. It is all about the profit line and we therefore have to determine with whom we can create the most effective and beneficial relationships to push the economy forward in the future.

Locally, Sir, I think it is important for us to look at the matter of attitude. This was very eloquently dealt with by the Honourable Member for St. James North. We, as a Government, need to deal with the issue of land prices in Barbados because, while we have formed effective solutions for the poor and the lower middle income groups. I think the cost of land for people who are in the middle income and upper middle income can, in fact, constitute a tremendous problem for us.

We have to ensure that there is proper management of capital projects and that we get value for money. I am hearing people say that the QEH's budget has been increased in this financial year by \$8 million or \$9 million. During the four or five years that I held the portfolio of health, the QEH's budget was increased by perhaps something like \$25 million, but did we get value for money? We have to ensure that when we make the money investment, the management of the services and product on the ground can deliver to the average Barbadian the quality service we intend for them to get by allocation of the resources. The mere allocation of the resources itself will not suffice unless those resources are properly managed.

We have to ensure that the cost of doing business in Barbados is brought down, particularly communications cost. We have to deal with the issue of transport and the road system because with this vast number of cars, we really need to have an improved road system that can carry the numbers of vehicles we have in Barbados.

In my view, we have to deal with two final issues. We must recognise that we have an aging population and in 10 to 15 years, they are going to put a severe strain on the economy. Therefore, we must start planning how we are going to meet the needs of that sector and offset the drain from the economy which the care for this group is going to cost us.

Finally, Sir, we have to ensure that we meet the new challenges of today's labour environment. We need new approaches and we need to ensure that we develop multi-skilled task forces who are flexible, because these are the days when there is no longer the kind of security of tenure there used to be in the marketplace.

If we can meet these challenges, Sir, then I am sure that the continued development of Barbados and its upward growth will be guaranteed, because we would have effectively dealt with all the challenges and overcome all the challenges for our sustainable development.

Thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.35 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am very supportive of this measure to stimulate the economy and I want to say from the outset, it is my view that the measures that the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, has enunciated and as contained in the Estimates this year, will no doubt, continue to provide a measure of comfort to all Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the Estimates of Expenditure, one finds that for the year ending on March 31, 2002, the Government will have spent some \$2.1 billion in revenue and the next year ending March 31, 2003, the expenditure is expected to increase by another \$100 million. The Government continues to increase the expenditure even in recessionary times, due to the leadership that is being provided to this country by the Prime Minister.

Sir, there were similar conditions between the years 1991 and 2000 but this year there seems to be some difference and I want to look at this difference. I will say that it has to do with the management of the economy. Our leader is a democrat who listens, who is courageous and who takes people into his consideration. Mr. Speaker, our driver can drive. There is no doubt that our driver has driven this economy to great heights and all householders in Barbados are confident today that the economy is in good hands. Mr. Speaker, all of us on this side are very happy to have the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter as our driver and our leader.

I daresay that a number of Democratic Labour Party supporters, and including, I believe, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, are happy that this economy is in safe hands. Therefore, I would want to say that in the year 1989, the reserves fell to \$12 million, high unemployment, structural adjustment programmes, 8 per cent cut...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House and I cannot let the records reflect, Sir, that in the year 1989 the foreign reserves were only \$12 million. That is the most misleading statement I have heard in my whole life.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I am glad the Honourable Member rose on a point of order because between the years 1989 and 1991, it fell from about \$42 million to a low of \$11 million. I just wanted to find out if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was aware and he certainly is aware of what is happening.

Aside.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, that is not the point. The unemployment rate between the years 1991-1993, went up to about 24 per cent. A structural adjustment programme was also the order of the day. If you look at what is happening today after the September 11, 2001 attacks, you will see that there are many problems in the economy, because many investors are not investing. Today, we still find that our reserves are moving higher, over \$1 billion and climbing.

Mr. Speaker, the employment level has stabilised to some extent to approximately 10 per cent. It was down to 9.3 per cent before and stabilising at 9.8 per cent or 10 per cent. Sir, not only this, but in the height of a world recession, the Government is thinking about giving salary increases. There are also investment opportunities available and looking at Barbados today, there is no sign of the recession and it all boils down to the way the economy is being handled.

1.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Any right thinking Barbadian living in Barbados or abroad will agree that this economy is being handled with great efficiency. We are proud at this time that our economy is doing well. I want publicly on the Floor of this House to compliment the Prime Minister who, in his quiet way without any publicity, has gone about his business by holding discussions with the unions, keeping the public in his view by letting them know what is happening, and helping the various sectors when it was needed.

The agricultural sector was given a number of stimuli and help last year. Subsidies were given to the agricultural department and funds were injected in tourism. All sectors of the Government were given help from our good driver and we are proud of him.

Mr. Speaker, there are persons on the Other Side who are not in here who would want us to believe that things are bad. I am saying that the confusion in the Democratic Labour Party is not because of the Honourable Members over there but because of persons who are trying to get in. They are talking about borrowing is too high. Mr. Speaker, the difference between members on the opposite side who are not in here and the members on this side are that we believe that in good times we should borrow in order to do things to the economy.

We have borrowed a lot of funds in this session but one can see where the funds are being spent. We are spending large sums of money on the airport and the seaport. We are spending large sums of money in agriculture and in tourism. We are spending large sums of

money in health and we are spending large sums of money in Home Affairs to reduce crime and violence. This is what we are doing. It is important to note, despite some of those writers who have been trying to promote doom and gloom in the country, that all of the money that was borrowed on this side had been well spent and we are justly proud on this.

So I want to dismiss those persons who are causing tremendous confusion, not to us the Government but, among the Democratic Labour Party for they must get their act together.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about what I see as an important phenomenon in this country and what is happening in our economy. One finds that there is a high degree of liquidity within the banking system today as a result of diminished aggregate demand, with the excess liquidity ratio growing to 11.5 per cent. That is extremely high.

When one looks at demand deposits, time deposits and savings deposits at the end of 1999 through to the end of 2001, one finds that the banking system has more than \$404 million in excess liquidity. Barbadians have saved tremendously. At the end of 1999 there was \$2 769.9 billion in the banking system. By the end of 2001 it was \$3.174 billion. So the banking system has tremendous opportunity to move forward today. We must be cognisant of the fact that people are saving a lot of money in this country. A lot of these funds have been saved by ordinary people who are saving at the credit unions and at the banks so the banks have made tremendous profits over the last year.

I am, therefore, calling on the credit unions, the commercial banks and the insurance companies to invest some of this money in property and in real estate. The banks must formulate programmes to allow people to borrow some of its money. Over the last year or so, Government has decreased the lending rate and through instruments through the Central Bank has reduced the interest rates.

It is important for the banking system to accept the challenge today to do something to help create investment opportunities. People who go to the banks to get a mortgage have to pay a commitment fee and all types of fees before they can get a loan. The banks will prefer to lend money to buy a car and for all types of household items but whenever it comes to real estate they are reluctant to lend and if they do, they do so after much heartache, and that is unfair. For some reason that I do not understand, banks prefer to lend money for short-term purposes rather than for long-term purposes.

2.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, it was drawn to my attention that some of these interest rates for the short-term lending goes from as much as 9 per cent, 10 per cent, or even 20 per cent, whereas long term lending will go about 8 per cent, 9 per cent, or 11 per cent, but there is opportunity for investment in property.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 or so years, the Government has acquired tremendous property in this country. We have acquired more than 1 000 acres of land and it is at this time ripe for investment opportunities where we can turn this land into house spots for the people, where we can develop this land to realize the dreams of many individuals.

Mr. Speaker, it takes money to develop the land therefore the banking system should try to formulate a programme to come in with Government through a joint venture programme to help fund this development. Money lying in the bank is not a good investment. I believe the banks should now come in with Government through a partnership arrangement. The banking institutions, whether it be credit unions or insurance companies, should try to invest this money at home.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at what is happening today, if one looks at the Town and Country Planning Department, one can see that between 2000 and March 2001, the Town and Country Planning Department has approved 2 592 applications. If, for argument sake, we take that over a five-year period where one was supposed to develop or build a home at \$125,000 per average within a two or three-year period, the banking system is expected to lend more than \$324 million.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, the Town and Country Planning Department has approved another 1 756 lots so that there are a number of lots approved in Barbados that are ready for development. Therefore, the opportunities are here where the banking system can create an atmosphere for lending. I am told that it will take almost \$400 million to develop these 2 592 lots, both putting this land into a developed stage, constructing road, electricity and water and also providing the mortgages.

Mr. Speaker, the banking system has much more. I am saying that the \$400 million the banks now have in excess liquidity can safely be put into mortgage funding. They must find the opportunity to lend Barbadians money quicker. It takes too long for mortgages to turn around. I am aware they will speak of the legal problems but we will have to find the mechanism to get that straightened out.

Mr. Speaker, there are various opportunities to turn this economy around and the Government has come up

with the idea and the mechanism and we have acquired this property. It is now time for us to move forward.

Sir, when one looks at what has been happening in Government, if you take for example, the Barbados Mortgage Finance, of which we have responsibility, I understand they lend about 30 per cent of mortgage funds in Barbados. Within one year, at the end of year 2001, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company had given over 383 mortgages to a value of \$31 million. It is expected in the next year to lend more than \$30 million to a similar number of persons. Sir, when one looks at what is happening to the other loan institutions, it is expected that a lot of activities should be generated in this country over the next two or three years.

We are also projecting that a further \$10 million will be spent on home repairs only through the National Housing Corporation. Sir, when one looks at what is happening to the credit unions, a number of persons are now investing in properties. I am saying, Sir, that the opportunity is here for us to turn this recession around and provide valuable opportunities for workers.

Mr. Speaker, I too want to speak about the problem that has been confronting us as far as the cost of land is concerned. There are many persons who believe and have been making the assumption that the cost of land is too high. I agree that in some cases, one can make an argument for that, but generally speaking, we at the National Housing Corporation have been selling land at \$6.00 per square foot as a universal selling price. We still continue to sell land at \$2.50 per square foot. We still continue to sell land at 10 cents per square foot in the plantation tenantry programme. Sir, the Government programme has set the pace to keep the cost of land to a minimum. I understand that there are some developers who will want to increase the price and have been increasing the prices way above this \$6.00. Government will have to find the mechanism to control the price of land. How do we do it? We suggest that if we put a programme in place where, using the demand and supply mechanism, where we will put land on the market the price of land will be reduced. Sir, we have formulated a joint venture programme which, in the next financial year, will put more than 500 house spots on the market. We are coming to this arrangement with some financial institutions, a number of reputable builders and persons who are in the development of land. We have spoken to them and are formulating a programme which, very soon, we will be able to announce that we will start this joint venture programme with the help of the private sector where we anticipate that more than 500 house spots will be put on the market in the next financial year.

It is also important for us to note that when we talk to the private sector entities who will come in with us, that the National Housing Corporation, even though it is going

with a private developer, will control the selling price of the land.

2.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: We expect the price of land to remain at \$5 or \$6 per square foot over the next year or so. I have been told that if we acquire 1 000 acres and there are 10 house spots per acre, that we will see more than 7 000 house spots in the next five or so years. Government has the land and we now have to have it developed so that persons demanding land will see their opportunities come true. There are a number of persons seeking shelter and we have to provide the opportunity for them to do so. We only now need the developers, financial institutions and the legal fraternity to come hand in hand with Government to work out a programme so that the cost of doing business with real estate will be reduced.

Mr. Speaker, we have an example of this in the Ministry of Housing where the Housing Credit Fund was established by this Government. This Barbados Labour Party has to take credit for this because in 1975 we set up the Housing Credit Fund and the records will show that out of a seed capital of US \$10 million in 1985 we have lent more than \$147 million to credit unions and banks for low income housing...

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Yes, it was hardly used by the Democratic Labour Party because they did not know how to use it.

The Prime Minister also made the point that the banking system is so liquid today that very soon we will be going to the market for \$50 million to prop up the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company.

The outlook for the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company over the next five years is good because the demand for loans to build houses and do repairs is very high and we must now go to the market. We are not like the Democratic Labour Party who will not go to the market when things are good. Mr. Speaker, nobody lends you money when things are bad with you. We can now go to the market to capitalise on this excess liquidity and we will borrow \$50 million to help generate monies for the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company. We will continue to lend first time homeowners at the rate of 6 per cent as long as they are working for under \$100 000 and if they are working for \$100 000 to \$200 000 the rate will be 7.5 per cent. We will also continue to lend 100 per cent loans. We are asking financial institutions to come in with

Government through a joint venture arrangement to help generate activity.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is spending tremendous money on road repairs, house construction and other social programmes. I am heartened by the number of roads and programmes being done in my constituency and other constituencies. The Prime Minister said yesterday that the Glebe in St. George is now being developed as an inner town and I am very happy to hear that. Mr. Speaker, we now have a police station, a new post office, a new community centre and we will be getting new market facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I am also told that there will be a new pavilion at the Glebe for the youngsters in the area. We want to ensure that the Glebe becomes a central area for recreation. There is a need for a hard court, lighting and to develop that central area so that when we come to the beautiful St. George Valley we will see an inner town that was truly developed by the Barbados Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, when you come to St. George, you will enjoy going through the lush green parts of St. George....

Mr. SPEAKER: Do not forget that you have to pass through my constituency first.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Of course, Mr. Speaker, we know the amount of roads and facilities that were done in your constituency. The hands of the Barbados Labour Party are touching every part of this island.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could you conclude?

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by saying that our leader can drive and that he is a good driver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to represent the good people of the Ivy community and Licorish Village where all the controversy surrounding the water zone is focussed. Sir, you do not have the opportunity to speak on the behalf of your people who are victims of a number of charged shotgun journalists. I am also here to speak on behalf of the ordinary voiceless in our constituency as well. These areas are Dean's Village, Station Hill, Belle View and the areas in close proximity that you represent.

I also believe that my voice will express the views of the good people of the Pine Housing Areas which the

Honourable Member sitting to my left, comrade, and inseparable, represents the people of Carrington Village, Grazettes, Bay Land and the working class people throughout Barbados. I believe that my voice is a genuine voice. I am not speaking because I focus my attention exclusively in the constituency of St. Michael East and that there are only poor people in my constituency. I am speaking in the interest of poor people not only in the western world but in the interest of poor people in the eastern part of this world as well as far as Asia, Africa and all those countries in the African continent. I believe that my contribution is a testimony of my commitment to the principle and not to the preservation of the vote. I want to make that point very clear.

When I joined this dispensation a number of years ago, it derived from a perception that there were a number of virtuous principles that guided the dispensation. These principles, in my view, were applied, not selfishly but universally within the interest of the development of mankind. I felt that this dispensation was extremely clear, and I still believe, and that the whole intention was to rid this rock of abject poverty, relative poverty in comparison to western standard standards.

I believe that this Party had the intention of the poor black entrepreneur with limited capital for investment in mind and that the Government of the day, based on its principles of social justice and an attempt to redress the imbalances in the economy, put the mechanisms in place to allow the majority of people to have not only a social stake in this policy but also an economic stake.

I believe this dispensation, as I examine and evaluate the programmes, and the leadership of this country are clear that the cultural role of the majority of people played a subordinate role to the minority of the people in the society. European cultural values were highly respected and everything that was African was relegated to the bottom of the cultural ladder.

I believe this Government felt these deficiencies needed to be addressed and redressed. I believe we have a responsibility to cultivate correct social environs, a kind of quality that is germane to equality and social justice. On that basis, Sir, I believe that this dispensation is on the right track.

Sir, the philosophy is necessary in any political party, although it wobbles all about and can never achieve any meaningful objective. This is not the case with this Party. It might not have a radical approach to changes nor is it conformist. I would love to see the Party in a reformist mode making the required minor adjustments in a political economy that might not be able to withstand the radical changes that can address all the issues and the principles which I highlighted. The Prime Minister within the

limitations of an economy with limited natural resources has limited flexibility, although he understands the global picture.

Sir, the trouble is, some other leaders whose perception or conceptions are fossilised do not understand that they are only operating in a mental concept of what is a global economy, which is exclusively the economy in the western world. When the United States speaks about global economy, they are speaking about economies, not only in the west but in the east. Our trading relationships are still rigidly restricted to the relationships of those of the colonial masters. These are the realities, not intentionally, but probably subconsciously.

Sir, that is why we have not been able over the years to establish any investment relationships with Latin America because the Spanish and the Portuguese control it. We have not established any strong bonds with countries like Suriname and St. Eustatius, which were Dutch, and we have not established any strong relationships with Martinique and Guadeloupe because the colonial divide exists among the Dutch, French and British in the region.

I am still worried why, at this stage, we cannot expand our trading and investment relationship. When we begin to talk about globalisation we must be able to locate ourselves in a strategic position where we can take advantages of relationships outside of the western as well.

Recently, I heard my colleague indicate that relationships will be established through tourism with the South African Airlines. Is it not possible for all agents of governance to try to establish new relationships on our behalf? Sir, concepts like these, I believe, demand a world view. Ministers, not only leaders, must have a world view especially when they have the responsibility for specific Ministries that deal with business, trade and tourism.

I am concerned that when I examine the functioning of Ministries, if all the Ministers understand what is the Party's world view or what it is they are trying to achieve. I am not indicting any specific person. I am concerned about that because we need to develop more politically to recognise that within our limited economy, we have to begin to think more about what objectives must guide us and how we should set about to achieve our goal, Sir.

I want to start my contribution on those issues. The Estimates must be guided within these objectives to achieve goals. The persons who constructed them did not recognise that they are thinkers and that a number of factors undermine the views that they express on paper. The reality is, they are guided by a world view, whether it is a world view that is positive or a world view governed by ignorance. Having the concept on paper must be clearly understood by a thinker so that he can understand what is

the intention of the Minister or the Government to implement the programmes and to achieve the goals they set about to achieve.

Sir, governance itself is not exclusively in the hands of a minister. Governance is also in the hands of the bureaucracy. I keep saying that on more than one occasion I heard Ministers expressed their disgust that they were unable to achieve the intention of the programme because the persons who are responsible for executing the programmes do not have the same interpretation of the language on the paper.

Sir, that is why I say that understanding your philosophy is important at all different stages of Government. So ultimately, the people can benefit from the exercise.

2.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: In the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes talked about the importance of the leviathan. So we understood that you must sacrifice very early part of your freedoms and your interests and place them at the disposal either of an individual in the form of a dictatorship, or at the disposal of a collective body of persons who would be responsible for governance. The State has to judge us.

The best mechanism for determining whether programmes or estimates are effective is the voice of the people. They determine whether the programme has impact or not. We are not supporters of the theories of Hobbes. We are not supporters of the theory of Karl Marx who denounced absolutely the system of capitalism. We accept capitalism even if we function on the periphery of capitalism itself, recognising that we are in a more complex world and that Karl Marx himself did not even take into consideration the role of the welfare state which is a mechanism that we have in our governance.

Sir, I just want to explain, and I know it may sound farfetched to some but we have our Caribbean thinkers as well. We have had great Caribbean thinkers who understood the under-development process, men like Walter Rodney, Girvan, that looked at it from an economic perspective. We have had people who examined the structure of Government, and the reason for trying to understand the principle that should guide us and what is happening to us is because they were all searching for solutions, including Michael Manley, in the context of change, all searching for solutions to how can we operate in a hostile international environment, an environment which is not friendly, which is absolutely selfish and governed by American hegemony.

The Americans do not control world power based on any genuine consensus, but on coercion, because of its military strength with no respect for international organisations, and they also govern the organisations that now speak to us about reciprocity. Such noble terms! Reciprocity in a small State with limited resources with no industrial base but telling us that we must compete in the world market and the market must be open to all. You, handicapped by your limited resources, Sir, have to compete with the United States of America and Japan. We have to face that.

It is miraculous that any leader in a small economy like Barbados can still sustain the social services. It is miraculous that we can have a balance of payments in this period of recession, so to speak, in the Western world of \$1.5 billion in foreign reserves. Although the reduction in the unemployment level has not been as generous to my people as it ought to be, because of the inequity in which the jobs have been utilised by the Ministers, Sir, at a national level the reports are genuine that we have been able to keep it down to 10 and sometimes to the level of single digits.

Sir, I want to make another point, I am not going to respond to the comrade who makes mockery at the lives of black people who have not been privileged to use water. I am not going to respond to that. Some people do not have the social conscience to know that matters like these ought to be taken seriously. This Government has put in place provisions in these new Estimates for over \$50 million which will come from bonds, from the Barbados Mutual Finance, and it is my understanding that many ordinary, working class persons, black persons... There are many in here who do not like to hear the word "poor" and make mockery of it. When a man speaks about poverty, for some reason it seems to be palatable but a word that is synonymous with poverty, "poor", he does not understand it and does not want to hear it. It jars the ears. These are men that are recent escapes from the plantation. That is the problem and they do not want to respect these things.

This Party, from its inception with Grantley Adams, committed itself to ridding this country of poverty. The outcome of the Report of the Moyne Commission of the 1930s clearly indicates the focus of the Government of the day in 1951 led by Sir Grantley Herbert Adams, so this poverty attack did not start with any report from the IADB. It is the genesis of the political dispensation to which I belong and which I intend to support.

Aside.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: I am the best person to determine which is the better of the two because I have experienced administration in both.

Nine million dollars, Sir, would be going to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and that is why I say it is so important that ordinary people in the street recognise how important it is to have a dispensation at the eve of the 21st century within the first decade that can keep the social services together because the social services are not only the agencies and departments that fall under the Ministry of Social Transformation. The Ministry of Education and the Hospital are part of the social services. It tells you how we, as a people, recognise the role of the State in ensuring that disadvantaged persons can have an opportunity to enjoy the same standard and quality of life as persons in the affluent class within the system itself.

In Barbados, the reality is the concept of class and race and that is why we have to face realities if we are going to talk about reconciliation. When we talk about affluence, we know where the focus of the affluence lies, which pigmentation, which ethnic body. When you talk about poverty, you know where it lies, with just a little exclusive pocket in St. John that might be a little different; but the majority of people in this society that sweat hard and make the economy what it is, are ridiculed every day. People do things for them and laugh every day.

2.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: The people are experiencing social hardship in a country where there is little land and public officers make public policy statements that are not coming from the Government or the Ministers, about the removal of people from their lands and classify them derogatorily, as "squatters". Sir, that is why I say we have to be clear, not only when the structures and ideas are put on paper, but all administrators must be extremely consistent with the conscience of the Government, and tell the people that land is limited because Barbadians overseas are buying up the land.

They do not understand the idiosyncracies of the development of the people in certain constituencies, or they do not know that before the establishing of communities like the Ivy and the Pine - the communities to which you refer existing off the plantations of the Belle and Lower Estate - but they make the public believe that these people are squatters encroaching on lands. Sir, many traditional families that live in My Lord's Hill, Bridge Road, Station Hill, Hothersal Turning and the Belle gully - an area that is only known as the Belle, but embraces all of these communities of, probably, 5 000 people, and they make you believe that six or seven individuals erect houses on an area and, therefore, the whole community is perceived as squatters. There are people who live that perception of them every day and we hear officers using those pejorative

terms in reference to those people. I am angry about it. I remain angry and I will die fighting this fight.

Sir, even if the constituencies themselves take on a different light in terms of geography, I will die fighting the fight on behalf of those people, because it is a fight to which I have committed myself, which is to defend those voiceless people in my community. It is not anything caroling. It is something I take very seriously.

Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation is one of the most important units this Government brought into the system of governance, along with the Rural Development Commission, the HIV/AIDS Commission, and some of the other new areas for which the Government has taken responsibility. Sir, that is why I say that the system of governance is more complex now, than the days of the 17th century thinkers, and even in the days of some of our Caribbean thinkers. It is more complex because the United States has been fortunate in ensuring that the era of imperialism does not exist.

Sir, 260 000 people in this country today have to determine if these Estimates will impact on their lives, and that is what we have to think about. The populace must be convinced that this Party, with its prudent and committed leadership, is doing the job they expect them to do. They also have to be convinced that they are ruling with courage and that no subordinate agency, in the form of the bureaucracy, will dictate the Government's programmes or policies. There are some persons who have been vested with authority but do not understand the strength of the commitment of whom they are accountable and they only understand it at the end of the five-year term.

Sir, you are here to represent the people of Barbados and more so, those who cannot represent themselves. Do not get into a state of euphoria when you show that you have the courage to deal with the poor and vulnerable, but you do not have the courage to deal with the people, who are from a certain social echelon in this community, but they show courage, and their chests expand when they deal with certain types of people in Barbados.

Sir, I expect to see men and women of courage.

Aside.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, I believe that our last programme has been tested and the Prime Minister has introduced a new set of adjustments to take the country forward for the year 2002-2003. In these Estimates, the Prime Minister and Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, has increased the actual allocation to the Ministry of Social Transformation from \$74 million to \$76 million. It might sound small but the reality is that you do not have to judge this Ministry by the quantitative sum that it received,

but by the qualitative contribution that is made into the transformation of the lives of many.

Many people do not see it, because they do not want to see it, but you just have to go into the communities where poverty exists, and you will see where the Ministry of Social Transformation touched the lives of people. I see people looking out through their front windows, with dignity, who had no front windows before, only solid board at their windows. I have seen people, Sir, feeling comfortable going into the smallest room in the house, with a sense of comfort and pride, where any visitor to the house today or tomorrow can be free to use the wash room without the embarrassment that these people had to go through in the past. Do you understand the psychological scars of poverty?

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South spoke passionately yesterday, and from his heart, about the experiences of the social changes, and the psychological pride of the ordinary people in his constituency. I remain committed to this and I will reveal this to you now and I will tell you why it is so important to me. My late grandmother died as a consequence of journeying in the dark one night, to assist someone that was sick, with what is commonly described as a "po" to dispose of the contents. She fell and struck her head and died as a consequence of the fall.

Sir, I know how inhumane and criminal it is for anybody to have to live in those circumstances and that is why I call for serious, profound and in-depth consideration when it comes to the people of the Belle - your constituency, Sir, - and My Lord's Hill. You do not rush in and make statements that are idiotic, as though you have a shot gun, and you could become a journalistic terrorist walking around shooting down ordinary people, who cannot defend themselves. You cannot do it that way. The Government must put a humane approach in place to rescue those people, and must not charge them or indite them for any felonious conduct whatsoever. I am not going to entertain it and it might not be a friendly pronouncement, so do not even think about it.

There are many questions that must be answered as it relates to the Zone 1 problem. The Government purchased land in 1981 in My Lord's Hill with the taxpayers' money. They cannot bid on it today because it is Zone 1 land. The Government, under the Ministry of Transport and Works, purchased a property at the bottom of Flint Hall in the Zone 1 area for the Transport Board. One of the same ministries that expressed their concern about bringing an additional populace, or whatever term best suited, into the same constituency to increase the sewerage, because every human being must defecate. You do not have to do it at any specific time. It happens day or night, so if you are going to put the Transport Board there,

there must be an increase of the sewerage in the community.

What kind of nonsensical inconsistency is coming from certain leaders of the State? I am not talking about a house they bought 40 years ago. They bought the house within the last four to five years. The house is closed now, and these are questions that must be answered. The policy must show consistency, Sir, so much for that, and we will probably deal with this a little later as we speak to each other.

2.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, the Prime Minister spoke earlier about the changing of lives and the strengthening of human capital. He recognised that the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports has a responsibility to the young people at the post secondary and post tertiary level and to those who have not had access to that level of education. He also recognised that we need to increase the human capital and the capability of the people to respond to the changes that will impact upon them through changes in technology in the global market.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Social Transformation and the Cabinet have constructed a mechanism to reach out to the boys and the girls “on the block” as they are classified, who have been alienated from mainstream society by giving them an opportunity to explore and exploit the opportunities available to them in the new resource centres across Barbados.

The Minister will probably go into more detail in listing those resource centres and the strategic points at the first phase of the programme. Those people I just mentioned will have an opportunity to go into the resource centres and be exposed to well qualified instructors or teachers, whichever term is most suitable, who will instill the correct skills because the courses are going to be very broad-based courses because the community centres are not going to be used exclusively for information technology. Other courses that are edifying will also be taught within the centres. Opportunities will be within the same resource centres for young people and those who are not so young to exploit the opportunities vested to them by this Government. We have allocated \$2.5 million to the community centres to purchase computers, to put the infrastructure in place and to provide remuneration for the personnel who will work within those centres.

One cannot want a more egalitarian, more passionate and more compassionate Government than this Barbados Labour Party regime at this point in history in a western hemisphere that is hostile and in a region where we are still

trying to establish harmony with our brothers. Within all of that, we are able to set aside a large portion of our revenue and direct it to helping the poor in this society. Therefore, this humane party must be judged based on how it responds to the poor because even Jesus recognised the poor as his focus.

I do not know why people feel that the word “poor” is something they ought to dodge and retreat from when they hear it as though it is an enemy you are talking about. No party that speaks about social democracy can denounce programmes where the State recognises its role to the poor, to the vulnerable and to the marginalised.

Some people do not like to hear me say these words but the reality of this society is that the intellectuals who are snobs in the system described these people as rustics. They believe that the poor is from plebeian stock and that no virtues that ought to be respected exist within the households. They also believe that the districts which produced these people, produced criminals and that nothing good can come out of Nazareth. Therefore, the Minister has to deal with that challenge.

I would hope that the young people and the marginalised people who sometimes are suspicious of politicians, would recognise the good that this Government and the Minister intends to do. I am saying, I said it before and I am going to say it again, and I am not saying because I work in the Ministry of Social Transformation, that no one can do this job better than the present Minister because of his personal experiences. When he talks, he does not talk as an academic. He talks as a man of experience in the specific area of life who is not ashamed to talk about poverty.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think that is a good point but you have to end it now. You have two minutes to wind up.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: I am above the clouds so I would have to make a helicopter landing.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: I believe I have been able to explain the manner in which this Government must be judged because I believe that the focus of this Government on the right people in the society is correct. I believe that as long as the Government is consistent with its commitment to the people of Barbados, a commitment which the founding fathers of this dispensation hold strong, that at the end of the day any right-thinking person would reward the Government.

Sir, I am extremely pleased to identify myself with the programmes of this Government. I am extremely pleased to be led by the outstanding leadership which we

have and I look forward to spending a long time here as part and parcel of this political dispensation, the Barbados Labour Party.

I thank you very much.

3.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. D. T. GILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this year's Estimate Debate. Sir, this document which was laid in Parliament on Tuesday last, of which we are now debating, is what I repeatedly refer to as the compass and chart of Government's financial and economic journey for the coming year.

On Sunday evening, one of my constituents who had visited my office saw me perusing the document and wondered what it was. When I showed it to him he said, "that has to be the dictionary for Government". Sir, I sat back and thought to myself and said that after all he was not wrong because this Estimate debate defines numerically what the various Ministries, Departments, Boards, et cetera, will have at their disposal and what Government will raise in respect to income and defines so rather clearly.

Sir, as I speak to you, there is no country in the western hemisphere which could begin to think about compiling a document relating to income and expenditure for the coming financial year without taking serious consideration of what unfolded in North America during the month of September last, when war was declared on America and when the jugular of world trade was severed.

Sir, events of even lesser catastrophic magnitude have had a ricocheting and reverberating effect - and I refer to the Enron fiasco which has sent shock waves through the accounting profession, the stock market and the corporate world as a whole. Even in most recent times, the giant conglomerate and transglobal Mertz, a leading pharmaceutical entity, has dissociated itself publicly from the Andersen Accounting Group.

Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has so structured these Estimates as to restructure and recapitalise those Ministries which would have felt a serious falloff due to these international events. Therefore, Ministries such as: Tourism, International Business and Agriculture, he has been able to put into place, but has not done so at the expense of the other social Ministries and social services. He did not seek to put them on the back burner.

He has dealt with the Ministry which accounts for foreign exchange income and has dealt simultaneously with

those social services which were forgotten and put on the back burner in the early 1990s when a DLP Administration was in charge of the destiny of the country. The Honourable Minister of Finance, as he refers to that group as the human capital, had been able to see it fit to allocate some \$6.5 million next year to the QEH, \$16.3 million to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Programme and a \$45 million to the EduTech Programme.

Sir, as I said in the early 1990s, under the DLP Administration, when they were faced with recession, the support systems such as the National Assistance Board (NAB), Welfare Department, Children's Homes, Schools, even the Barbados Drug Service; all of them had come in for severe cuts which still has the social structure wobbling after they had emitted office in 1994.

Sir, such is the resilience of our economic strip at the moment that even though the economy started to contract prior to the happening of September - and the Honourable Minister of Finance never denies that; actually he prefaces most of his statements on that. Sir, the resilience of our economic strip has been so great that even though the Honourable Prime Minister was forced to cut down on what I refer to as his run up late last year, he was still able to maintain a tight line and length and is about to end the financial year with good figures - 9.8 per cent unemployment rate, and to hold down the deficit to 3.8 per cent of GDP and, Sir, predicting to have some good figures at this time next year when I suppose he will attempt to increase his runup once again - a deficit of 4.7 per cent of GDP.

Mr. Speaker, this means that the right things were being done all along or else the turbulence into which we have found ourselves would have been more deleterious to the economy. Sir, something good had to be happening. In a discussion paper which I read and was produced by an economist, Lawrence Lau, who was speaking on Global Financial Turmoil and Reform and giving a United Nation's perspective, he said there were certain factors which had led the Asian economy into serious demise in which they found themselves in the mid to late 1990s.

He said that these conditions prevailed and were not corrected, and were ultimately responsible for the demise in which they found themselves. He quoted factors such as falling exchange rates which did not occur with our local dispensation, low rates of GDP growth as being responsible for the demise, which does not obtain in this situation, higher interest rates which did not obtain in this instance, low domestic savings rates, which did not occur in this dispensation. Therefore I am saying, Sir, that whatever was seen responsible for the demise of the Asian economy, the exact opposite has occurred in our dispensation.

Sir, when we came to this Chamber in August of last year with what I refer to as an exciting, innovative and liberal package which saw the Economic Statement and Budgetary Proposals for this period of time, it was designed to cope with new trade agreements, to deal with new aspects of globalisation, liberalised trade and to deal with the new information age.

3.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. D. T. GILL: Sir, that package gave us a certain amount of elbow room so that when we had to make adjustment later on last year this Administration was able to do so without crumbling. In other words, our economic structure is built and designed to respond to expansion and contraction.

Sir, this is no meagre achievement. It is a state of affairs that needs to be repeated and to remind the populace about. It shows good planning and intellect being put into the Government finance and economic engineering architecture.

Sir, although the Honourable Minister of Finance maintained his usual standard of economic and financial prudence, this set of Estimates continues to show even a greater human face than the Estimates of 2001/2002 period. The fragile and vulnerable in our society have not been overlooked even though we set out to re-energise our too biggest foreign exchange spenders, international business and tourism while bearing in mind that the nation's health is at risk. If the nation's health is at risk or impaired, our primary engines of economic growth will be compromised.

Sir, it was predicted by a local gerontologist that there exists the probability of some retirees having to go back to the workplace. It is a fact and a worrying one. Sir, it has a concomitant problem because it is difficult to ask a man to come back to work after he anticipated a retirement.

Sir, the sum of money earmarked for the revamping of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital by way of expansion of the management structure is welcomed. The increase of \$28 million to \$35 million to the Barbados Drug Service, a \$7 million increase of which some \$6 million is going to supplies, also needs to be lauded.

The full comprehensive treatment of the HIV/AIDS Programme is more than justifiable. I speak from a vantage point where, as the Chairman of the Urban Development Commission and as one invited to sit on the HIV/AIDS Commission, I see whole families literally brought to their knees because of the death of a father, or mother, or both parents, and children being left with no proper structure to reside. At least there is some hope as these sufferers make

their way daily to collect their medication to make life as palatable and endurable as possible.

Sir, we must not treat this programme lightly because there are people in the society who would say that this money should be shifted into other areas, but we do not know upon whom the virus will visit itself.

Sir, I refer to a convention held in 2000 in the Solomon Islands where Ministers of Youth Affairs convened a caucus on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Sir, the release recommended that the Commonwealth Youth Programme should encourage new research into new ways of presenting the spread of the disease which is fast becoming one of the major obstacles to economic and social development particularly for young people in many Commonwealth countries. The Ministers were urged to release resources to fight the epidemic. Sir, it makes no sense sweeping these things under the carpet because it is a serious problem. Some are in their ivory towers, safely insulated with good jobs, insurance policies and savings but this virus can inflict itself upon them or their children and we know that it will take millions of dollars to treat and maintain the sufferers of this pandemic.

3.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. D.T. GILL: Sir, the Urban Development Commission is doing all in its capability to make the lives of whom we refer to as the poorest as comfortable as possible. I know that we cannot touch the lives of everyone.

Sir, at times I feel sad for my research investigators when they return from field trips, the conditions they are faced with, such as poor sewage, poor drainage or poor shelter. To crown it all, when the small children see a parent about to leave this world in the most debilitating state, it makes the job of the research investigator a very difficult one.

I have been associated with a camp where there were approximately 60 students. Sir, out there were six students out of the group who lost their parents to the virus. I also know of some young children from a foreign land who came to Barbados. One parent went back home and died of the virus because the parent could not stand being among their children. The other parent followed shortly after and these children were left in the care of an aunt. When the aunt was contacted about what to do with these children, she was also afflicted with the virus. This HIV/AIDS Programme is one we have to tackle head-on and with full steam as we go into the 21st century. This is one of our 21st century problems.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party is regularly attacked for not doing anything for what is referred to as small black businesses. These Estimates outline quite clearly what will be done for the tourism sector by way of a Tourism Loan Fund. Too often we hear of under capitalisation. This is something I know about because I have first-hand experience.

Sir, you cannot tell a family or an individual what line of investment they should go into. Many Barbadians believe they should pool their money together, as brothers and sisters, or friends, and go into the hospitality business. Many of these businesses have gone belly up and some are wobbling at the knees. This assistance that is coming is more than worthy of note. This new fund will support small hoteliers with joint marketing, promotional and joint purchasing and these conditions should be applauded.

Sir, time and energy have been spent with the international business and tourism. We hear that enough is not being done for agriculture. There seemed to be a triple-pronged approach. These approaches include capitalising and, at the same time, innovative techniques, referred to by the Minister, and niche markets. These three must go together for them to make any meaningful impact.

Sir, before the events of September 11th, the Prime Minister in his Financial Statement, Economic and Financial Policies had put a package in place for farmers and those involved in agriculture. A grant of 30 per cent of the cost for approved organic inputs made from local materials up to a maximum of \$500 per hectare made from compost and pesticide fertiliser. We must repeat these things and let the public know what had been addressed in the Estimates was not done in a vacuum but there is an attachment. There is a common string running through what was addressed in the last Financial Statement and what is addressed in this year's Estimates - a rebate of 40 per cent for the components of a green house, hydroponic systems for a crop or horticultural production, to a maximum of \$30 000, in order to stimulate the investment improvement technology. Sir, if this is not innovation and not new and exciting to deal with the acreage which a farmer will have to contend with, then tell what is.

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL: The Agricultural Trust, with a capital base of \$20 million, augurs well for the future of agriculture in the country.

Energy cost seems to be our greatest problem when it comes to manufacturing and agriculture. We must address in no unswerving way the use of our sun energy, wind and where possible wave energy. We must look down the road for new, sustainable and renewable energy sources.

Finally, this Administration has come in for a great public flogging for our highways and roads. I can say this afternoon that I am particularly pleased with the progress our road safety and expansion programme has made, especially that stretch of road that lies within my constituency at Tweedside Road, Government Hill and Welches. I had a peek at the work done last weekend but sometimes I even forget what that area looked like before. It is approximately seven months that the work was going on.

Sir, beyond my constituency, the junction of Culloden Road and Dalkeith, major works have been put in place. Pipelines that were laid for 50 years have been replaced and the roads have been widened, making it much safer. I remember as a little boy going to school where I feared travelling that route.

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL: Finally, I must laud the Ministry of Public Works for the accommodation works which have been done to properties alongside the roads which have been widened and made safer. The setting back of the utility lines, the building of guard walls and the paving of entrances have made the whole area appear to be a smooth and continuous one.

Sir, this Administration could not have achieved in such a short space of time were it not for the sharp, far-reaching foresight of an administration captained by one of even greater qualities.

Sir, I am much obliged to you.

3.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, as this Second Reading begins to wind down, I want to put on record my full support for the message and proposals contained in the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure as expanded on by the Right Honourable Prime Minister yesterday.

I want to enlist fully the support of all members of the public for what is a good job being done by this Government, and I want to enlist that support by referring back to the announcements made in the last Economic Statement in August last year when, although clearly on the horizon, and certainly being constantly propagated by the members of the Opposition that the international economy was in the grips of a recession, and that Barbados would have been reeling under that recession, it was still possible to come to this Honourable Chamber in August of last year to give \$6.5 million to assist immediately the Barbados

Tourism Authority with an improved and intensified marketing thrust.

It was still possible then to establish a new \$25 million industrial investment and employment fund to act as a source of funds to finance the retooling of industries in the manufacturing sector. It was still possible then to raise both contributory and non-contributory pensions, to raise maternity grants and funeral grants, and to confer a lavish and elaborate set of concessions on the agricultural sector, despite the fact that the country was supposedly in the midst of an international recession. That, Mr. Speaker, was pre-September 11.

I am pleased, therefore, to enlist support today for the policies contained in this document, laid last Monday, on the basis of the fact that although there was September 11, and it is now confirmed that the world economy is in a recession, that this Government has still found it possible to be able to commit to a programme of expenditure in the next financial year of some \$2 300 000 000 to carry out a certain number of programmes and services over the next financial year.

In other words, despite being in the grips of a recession, it is still possible for this Government to find money to spend \$6.5 million to refurbish the Queen Elizabeth Hospital during the next year, \$16.3 million on a national HIV/AIDS prevention and control programme, \$45 million plus another promised \$7 million on an EduTech programme, \$43 million to complete the South Coast Sewerage Project, \$10.3 million to the building of a new forensic laboratory, \$60 million for the University of the West Indies, \$2 million on a community technology project and \$3.1 million on the development of sports and recreational facilities across Barbados.

In addition, the Government is going to ensure that it has the resources to pay civil servants the usual two-yearly increases that they are entitled to. Far from cutting anybody's salary, the commitment is to ensure that the civil servants continue to get their yearly increase in salary and, most importantly, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the Government will be spending some \$78 million through the Ministry of Social Transformation to continue the onslaught on poverty which began in this country just after the change of Government in 1994.

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that we, in this Honourable Chamber, are all equally interested in the alleviation of poverty, not only those who believe they have the ability to misuse, misunderstand or mispronounce a whole set of big words. Everyone in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, has an equal appreciation of and an equal desire to see that poverty is eradicated from this particular society, not only those as I said, who sometimes spend most of their time mispronouncing a whole set of big words and when

they do pronounce them correctly do not even understand what they mean. Everyone is equally concerned about poverty in this Honourable Chamber. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, as I said, when this Government can still find that in the throes of an international recession it has at its disposal a sum of money to ensure that it can carry on a massive social programme, then I think the Government is to be commended. If, in fact, there are signs of weakening international circumstances and a Government can still find it possible to do all these things, then if I were to be facetious, I would say perhaps we should even hope that the international situation gets worst so that we continue to do even better, but that would be a totally facetious remark, Mr. Speaker, which, obviously, I would not make.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to do is to spend a few minutes on a couple of matters that may touch on some aspect of my Ministry's programme for the coming financial year. I want to pick up a bit on what is going to happen in relation to the small business sector or the small entrepreneurs. Mr. Speaker, you would have remembered that on many occasions before I have spent some time elaborating on what this Government has done for the small businessman and I repeat today that no other administration has done more to assist small business people than this current Administration.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that I have highlighted instances where we initially provided a sum of money to fund a fully functioning secretariat for the Small Business Association. We set up a special unit in the Ministry of Commerce to ensure that in a very professional way we went about looking at the needs of the small business sector to ensure that it got the policy guidance it needed. A number of funds have been established, the Urban Enterprise Fund, the Rural Enterprise Fund, Fund Access and many others to ensure that there are a number of funds from which or to which small business persons could apply from time to time to ensure that they had some funds available to them.

What the Right Honourable Prime Minister announced yesterday takes us now one step further and, as he mentioned, there is going to be the establishment of an Innovation Fund. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased to have been able two weeks ago to take to Cabinet and secure Cabinet's approval for the establishment of the Innovation Fund. It is being established by way of a trust deed and to be injected into the Fund at the very beginning, will be the sum of \$5 million.

This Fund, basically, embodies the idea of providing technical assistance and equity financing to entrepreneurs who have good ideas, new, fresh ideas but who are in need of funds to help them commercialise those ideas. The Fund will provide technical assistance, technical expertise and equity financing to businesses and individuals who are in

the process of innovation as well as businesses which wish to innovate but are unable to do so because they simply do not have the technical and financial resources.

In addition, it is a reality that with the onset of trade liberalisation businesses are going to be forced to re-examine the way in which they are doing business, their operational procedures and production processes to fall in line with the developments, particularly in the technological area. Therefore, there is going to be a need to retrain staff so that they can master any new production, technologies or production processes. Again, the Innovation Fund is designed to ensure that those businesses planning to retrain staff can access the Fund for assistance.

The Fund obviously is going to be geared towards persons with new, fresh, innovative ideas. It is not a fund to deal with the traditional way of thinking. If you have a good idea with potential for high returns then you are going to be a prime candidate for assistance from the Fund.

3.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: The Fund will also assist persons to develop and prepare business plans so that they can get any additional financing needed to commercialise the concept or the product fully. Obviously, you want to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from the funds which are made available. Therefore, the concept of innovation is envisaged. Although it has a literal meaning, it will be interpreted as broadly as possible to include as many innovative ideas and activities as possible...

Aside.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Areas which would come under favourable consideration would be innovation in the area of marketing, personnel management, product processing innovation and managerial innovation. The Honourable Member for St. James South would be interested to know that no project that has a potentially negative impact on our land or marine environment would be taken on board. We expect that the projects which would stand a very good chance of gaining approval would be projects in relation to environmental management culture, such as music, the arts, film, energy conservation, waste management and information technology. Those are the areas which we expect would catch the eye and the support of the Innovation Fund more readily than other areas.

Mr. Speaker, businesses in Barbados have to recognise that the traditional way of doing things, has to come to an end. The emphasis now has to be placed on innovation, for the simple reason that, given the wave of

competition that is already upon us, the simple reality is that businesses and entrepreneurs have to cease thinking the obvious. They have to start to think beyond the obvious.

Mr. Speaker, I am the first to conclude, being an attorney by profession, that there is a traditional outlook and a traditional way of doing things, but we have to break away from this process if we are to survive in the new climate that is already upon us. Thinking the obvious may guarantee your survival, but thinking beyond the obvious, in my view, will more than likely ensure your success. Therefore, it is now incumbent on businesses to ensure that they break away from the traditional mode of doing business and break into new markets and new areas of innovation.

This brings me to another point, Mr. Speaker, that was raised by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter yesterday, and it has to do with the whole issue of the licencing regime, that was disbanded in Barbados on April 1, 2000 and was reintroduced on November 1, 2001 as part of an emergency economic programme. My Ministry, which has the responsibility for administering the licencing system, is right now in a very uncomfortable state, awaiting directions what to do in relation to the resumption of the issuing of licences.

There was a 90-day recess from November 1, 2001, which has technically ended but we are still having licences on hold. I want to say to all those who would want to hear that my Ministry has responsibility by name, for commerce and consumer affairs and therefore, while there are those who would wish to urge on me that some sector, maybe the small farmers or whatever, stand to lose, if the licencing system is disbanded, in relation to the import of agricultural products, there is also another area to commerce.

Sir, importers are also a significant component of the commercial sector. They are persons who import goods to sell for a living that is their commercial activity. They too, employ people like the local producers. They too, stand to lose and I know of one case already in Barbados of a local importer who sells meats, was assured about the availability of local meats, could not import it, because there was unlicensed. He could not get the licence. There were supposed to be local supplies in sufficient quantities available, but they were not, so he could not sell any meat and he too, had to lay off five people because he could not sell meat. Those five people represent five families, like the five local producers that would have been urged upon me and those five people became unemployed leaving five families unsupported. The commercial sector in Barbados has many sub sectors and that is the first thing we must remember.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, my Ministry also has responsibility for consumer affairs and my Ministry is taking the issue of consumer affairs so seriously that we have already submitted to the Ministry of the Civil Service, a proposal to restructure the price control division, standards' administrators and the weights and measures inspection.

The truth is that with so few items now under price control, the price control officers, by and large find themselves now assisting the standards' inspectors, who are only two in number, but who have to try to police some 44 mandatory standards. They cannot satisfactorily police the two mandatory standards, in particular, the one dealing with labour, and it is a serious challenge for those two officers.

On the other hand, Sir, you have a price control inspector who has not that much technically under his portfolio so it now resorts to having a system in place for the standards' inspectors and the weights and measures inspectors, so clearly there was a need for restructuring. The intention now is to create a department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and we are taking consumer affairs very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, representation is also made to me, on behalf of consumers, that they want to have more choice in terms of what they purchase and the source of what they purchase. Also, of concern to consumers, is adequate quality. I am not going to stand here and decry local quality in any way, but I am just saying that my Ministry wears many hats, for example, commerce and its consumers as well as consumer affairs, so there is not a very straight and clear-cut case which side we are supposed to take. This is why I am saying that we are anxiously awaiting a directive on what to do.

Sir, I want to say to the local producers that really and truly, they have to abandon the approach to merely buying time, because it is only a question of time. Whether or not the emergency package is extended, there is going to come a time when you have to revert to your obligation under the World Trade Organisation which requires the abandoning of the licencing system which we already did April 1, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, that situation is obviously going to be reverted to at some stage in the future. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the local entrepreneur and businessman to understand that his best bet lies in ensuring that he can break away from the traditional mode of doing business, and get into newer and innovative areas of business, so that he cannot only guarantee his survival, but can guarantee his success. Sir, that is the word of advice I would like to give to the local business community at this time.

God knows, Mr. Speaker, that they have had more than enough time to adjust to the reality that has hit us already. I remember there was a debate by the Opposition yesterday whether or not the licensing system should have been put on hold back in 1995 when it was put on hold. This meant that they were aware since 1995 that it was going to happen and it only happened in the year 2000, so they had those five years, if no more, to prepare for what is now upon us. I would urge them, rather than bellyaching, to accept the reality and get on with what I am sure they can very confidently do, this is to ensure that they can innovate and succeed.

My Ministry is so serious about the issue of innovation that early in the coming financial year, maybe in April or May, the National Council of Science and Technology will be hosting a workshop to make businesses aware of the benefits and the importance of innovation, creativity and a new type of entrepreneurship in what is now obviously an increasingly competitive environment.

Mr. Speaker, I want, with your permission, to touch on one last point which has to do with something that will be dealt with in the coming financial year and the significant amendments that are going to be made to the Cooperative Societies Act to help modernise the Credit Union Movement.

3.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. R. St.C TOPPIN: Credit unions in Barbados have been experiencing consistent growth since the 1991-92 recession. In fact, available statistics show that the assets of credit unions rose from \$188.5 million in 1992 to \$442.7 million at the end of 2001. Generally, credit unions have seen much improvement in their operations and some have been able to provide up-to-date financial information.

It is a fact that credit unions are now handling a lot of money. Therefore, steps must be taken to ensure that the money which comes by and large from the poorer segment of the community is not frittered away. There are some weaknesses in the law that inhibit the implementation of measures which required directors to make and implement certain mechanisms for guaranteed improvement. The three points I want to focus on in relation to the weaknesses in the Credit Union Movement have to do with the collection of the delinquent loans, the controlling of investment in non-earning assets and the reduction in expenditure in areas that do not directly relate to the provision of services to the members of the credit unions.

Mr. Speaker, there are currently 42 active credit unions in Barbados and almost one-third of them are operating in a manner that would have to be described as

less than satisfactory. The problems they experience are managerial, financial and sometimes a bit of both. The managerial problems stemmed from the lack of training for officers who tend to be unaware of the concepts of safety and soundness. These officers are usually volunteers and because they are volunteers they are not trained in any disciplines at all that relates to the management of a business enterprise. Therefore, they refuse to take advice or to follow any directives from the Registrar of Cooperatives.

If one were to look at the area of delinquent loans, one would see that improper collection procedures are in place in relation to those loans. Therefore, the overall delinquency rate in the credit union sector stands at 5.7 per cent although some societies experienced delinquency rates ranging from as low as 10 per cent to as high as 69 per cent. The danger in this is that sometimes the assets of credit unions can be overstated because if one looks at the figures for March 31, 2000, one will notice that it is estimated that the assets of the Movement for that year might have been overstated by as much as \$10.3 million due to loans that were in arrears for more than a year.

Mr. Speaker, I know I am going to have more time to spend on this when I present the amendments to Parliament so I just want to make one last point as it relates to investments in non-earning assets by the credit unions which places an undue financial burden on them. I want to illustrate the point by making reference to what one credit union did last year.

There is a small credit union with assets of less than \$1 million and a membership of less than 500 persons with many of them advanced in age. In total disregard of the advice of the Registrar and other concerned persons, they spent \$490 000 in cash out of that \$1 million on the acquisition of an old building which just ties up valuable capital that the credit union would have had to spend.

Mr. Speaker, there is anxiety to have this particular Second Reading brought to a close so with those remarks I give my support to the measures before Parliament today.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to conclude this debate and to thank and compliment all Honourable Members of this Parliament who have spoken in what has really been a very constructive exercise.

I really believe, Mr. Speaker, that I have a duty to end where I began by indicating and underscoring the need for parliamentary reform. I think it is a very wrong thing that the budgetary process of Government should only engage this Parliament in this form for as short a period as it does. In the Jamaican Parliament, the budgetary process engages Parliament for three weeks and I think we need to

seriously review the Standing Orders to allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure and a more comprehensive review of the policies and programmes either implied, or made explicit in those Estimates of Expenditure that Parliament is being asked to approve.

There is the need for the Standing Orders Committee to treat to this matter in a specialised way and have people appearing before it and for Members of Parliament to be given the opportunity in greater detail than is presently the case under the existing system, to make sure that their constituents' needs are reflected in the Estimates of Expenditure because people are in here as representatives of the people. The time of the year where the people's needs are most dealt with by Parliament is on this occasion when the Estimates of Government Expenditure are being discussed and approved.

I want to urge that we have parliamentary reform before the end of the next financial year to allow this Estimates debate to become the core of a budgetary exercise and to become more meaningful in the lives of this Parliament and in the lives of the people whom the Members of this Parliament represent.

We have been in this format for 30 years and Parliament has remained static in relation to its exercise of budgetary control while the society has changed and become more complex. I see this also as a way of making the Minister of Finance less powerful in the context of the budgetary process in Barbados. So I urge this upon Parliament as a necessary development and a necessary reform that is long overdue.

You can be assured that the Minister of Finance and the Office of the Ministry of Finance will give any parliamentary reform in this direction our full and comprehensive support because we are spending too little time dealing with the people's business. The people's business is most obviously affected by the expenditure decision of the Government over the wide gamut of areas covered in the Estimates.

Sir, I say that because there is a clear statement of policy expressed by the Government in this debate and I am pleased that there has been no fundamental opposition nor contradiction of the policy by the Government.

We have come to know recessionary times in this country. It is not the first time and it will not be the last but we are satisfied that there has been a set of appropriate responses to our recessionary conditions and that we have emerged from the recession with our fundamentals still strong and with a platform from which we can launch a new bout of economic growth in this country.

4.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I believe that particular message has not been contradicted in this debate, nor has there been any comprehensive contradiction on the main focus of Government's policies, nor the directions in which Government intends to allocate expenditures over the course of the fiscal year to come.

Sir, if I had to sum up, I would say that the Budget is intended to be pro-growth in assisting with the restoration of the conditions for growth in this economy. Over the course of the next year, the Government proposes to spend \$2.3 billion more than it spent last year. That addition to its purchasing power will add to its growth. I will do so without putting any undue pressure on our balance of payment because an additional \$100 million in spending power cannot seriously affect our reserves. We have now established a new plateau of foreign reserves at a level of \$1.5 billion and, therefore, we can support this pro-growth Budget, satisfied that it can only induce beneficial effects to the Barbados economy without any serious adverse consequences for our Balance of Payments. In addition to the stimulus that will come from increased expenditure, I have been at great pains to indicate that an additional fillip will come from other off-budget activities, sponsored by entities under the control of the State. I am not going to repeat them but they are all intended to come on stream this year and should support the need for us to restore the strong growth in the Barbados economy.

There will be additional policies that the Government will pursue during the course of the year, and I have indicated that this will be a year of direct tax reform, both public and corporate, as well as pension reform and I do feel that those should be aimed to support growth in the economy.

Sir, I need to make a larger point. The Government is more interested in the fundamental repositioning of the Barbadian economy over the previous and long-term without doing damage to our need to address the short-term deficiencies in our economic functioning.

As regards that matter, Mr. Speaker, the need for us to continue to focus on the repositioning of this Barbados economy, I do feel the elements are evolving, most are in place. In this year 2002, we propose to accelerate the process of putting in place that new economic framework to create a new and modern Barbados economy, commensurate with the requirements of a modern economy, to function in a new globalized information age.

Mr. Speaker, I say that because even though we might be paying attention to - and we have to - the

immediate matters coming out of recession, the fundamental matter on which this country must focus as a strategic and a deliberate action, is to do those thing to reposition our economy to allow us, particularly after the year 2005, to be able to survive, to complete successfully, and to prosper in a new competitive global information age. In addition to the pro-growth aspects of Government policies during the course of this year, we will continue the exercise to put a new economic framework for Barbados in place.

Mr. Speaker, that is on the Government's side but there are some challenges which I have the responsibility to spell out to the wider society arising in many respects from some of the concerns that were mentioned in this debate.

Sir, the Government continues to play its part in stabilising the growth of the economy and in creating a framework for the comprehensive transformation of the Barbados economy. This is an exercise, not just for the State, but for the entire society, for all the social partners and for all the institutions of the civil society. This debate has, in fact, underscored the need for critical action to at least three areas to which I want to speak in synthesis and in summary as to what might be the move of the House.

Firstly, Sir, I want to say that there is no great virtue in our supporting higher levels of domestic savings unless there is also commensurate higher levels of investment. I think Parliament is of the view that the Barbadian society has done a wonderful job in stimulating domestic savings. It is a tremendous credit to the resilience and the resourcefulness of the Barbadian society that in a year that was supposed to be a recessionary year, \$400 million of savings was pinched out by the Barbadian society. It is our responsibility as leaders of this society now to find the best ways of translating these increased domestic savings into high levels of domestic productivity and domestic investment. Mr. Speaker, that is one of the compelling imperatives of our time. It will be a tragic waste of one of our more important national resources for there to be continuing high levels of domestic savings, high levels of liquidity in the banking system and lower levels of investment in Barbados and, Sir, that has to change.

In the same way the Government has announced major initiatives to support the restructuring of our main industries, investment fund and the agricultural fund, there is need for an important private sector consultation among the productive sectors and the financial institutions of Barbados to devise them for financial reconstruction on the financial systems of Barbados. A larger proportion of our national savings have, at this juncture, to go to recapitalising our main productive sectors if Barbados is to evolve, particularly, after the year 2005, with a new modern economic system capable of functioning in a highly competitive environment.

Sir, I am not satisfied that enough is being done in the private sector to mobilise the requisite resources to finance the re-engineering of our production system. To put it simply and in summary, there is a need for us to re-engineer the existing production system. What we have in manufacturing, what we have in agriculture and in tourism, is largely a productive system that was intended for a simpler place and a simpler time. It will not survive in a more complex age and there is the need and the capacity to do it. Barbados is awashed with liquidity and this must be dealt with as a matter of urgent priority. I feel that is a national requirement that must be attended to even as we, ourselves, in this Parliament, discuss how we will spend \$2.3 million of public resources of which we have control.

Secondly, this House agrees that an area of greater social deficiency in Barbados is housing. Our housing standards have not kept pace with what people would want. The Minister of Housing - poor fellow - is bombarded with a demand for housing that he cannot produce, but the reality about Barbados is that Barbados has historically been and will continue to be a property-owning democracy. In a property-owning democracy, the responsibility for housing solution really is the responsibility of the private individual and where everybody in Barbados has sought to resolve a private solution to their housing needs, I do not think we should so fundamentally alter the dialectics of our development to transform what has historically been the functioning of a property-owning democracy into a State-led situation.

Again, Sir, a larger proportion of our domestic savings must go to meet one of the social problems of the people - housing. There has to be a relaxation in the presumption that the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation have to meet all of the needs for housing in this country. It has never been so, it will never be so. Clearly there has to be a national consultation and concurrence where the financiers and builders come together and try to use more of our national savings and the excess liquidity to support an enlarged housing programme. It is so obvious, I do not know why it was not acted upon, but sometimes things are too simple.

I support the call for less of our national savings to support the financing of private consumption and more to go towards the financing of capital formation, particularly in the areas of social needs. There is a need for consultation of a high level, between builders and financiers and for everybody to have a programme of greater and enlarged resources for housing.

4.10 p.m.

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Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, as regards the new economic framework, the Government has accepted the need for public sector reform. We may be criticised as regard the pace of the reform but we have accepted the need for the reform. We are not going to have a new economic system or a new paradigm in Barbados within which our development takes place unless there is also private sector reform.

Sir, the private sector simply has to change the way in which it does its business. I want to urge that the private sector must bring itself together in the same way it pressures Government to change its business ways. The private sector has to put in place the things that a serious modern private sector in an information age will do to reform itself.

In my experience as Prime Minister of this country, the most disgraceful thing I can remember was that three or four years ago I gave the private sector of this country an incentive where for every \$1 spent in developing capacity to deal with trade negotiations and whatever else, they could claim \$1.50 in tax relief. Sir, we are living in an economy dominated by trade relationship and not one penny in tax relief has been spent. This, in my judgement, reflects the urgent need for the private sector to reform itself in order for us to be satisfied that we will be able to carry out this programme.

Mr. Speaker, I have said enough to indicate to you that the year 2002 will be a year for international business. I have been criticised by the Honourable Member for St. John for having travelled a lot over the last two years. Mr. Speaker, I traveled a lot to defend the country against the OECD and the defence has been successful. The time is upon us for us to reap the dividends from the investment because I saw it as an investment. Barbados has evolved from the OECD initiative and this is the one galvanizing thing this year that has presented an opportunity for us.

There has been reference today in the international Press that throughout the entire OECD initiative to date, that only two countries, Barbados and Monaco, have come out with any credit. The key is not to take the credit but to take the economic dividend. This is the year where there has to be a quantum leap forward in the development of the international business and financial industry of this country.

I had two meetings already following the OECD decision with the private sector and asked them to tell me what they want to get the job done. The reports are at hand and I have asked the Ministry to put it in the form of a programme and plan of action.

I give the House the assurance that I shall meet with the Ministry of International Business to make sure that

Barbados is transformed into the high quality international business and financial centre that must underpin our transformation into a developed society. Sir, you will see the efforts this year now that the dark clouds of the OECD have lifted.

Sir, I am not in a fractious mood today and I am not going to trouble the Honourable Member for St. John. In fact, I suspect that the Honourable Member for St. John has enough trouble and he does not need me to trouble him.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: He keeps troubling the GEMS but I will begin by putting the matter in a broad, philosophical context.

Mr. Speaker, nothing of any major consequence ever happened in this country unless it has been the subject of the most searching and vitriolic criticism. When we talked about independence, people left Barbados and went to Australia because it was felt that it could not be done. When we were building the original Hilton hotel, there were nay-sayers. When we built the Treasury building there were also many nay-sayers. Grantley Adams was crucified for the fact that he built the Deep Water Harbour.

I was in this House when the ABC Highway was built and people asked why Tom Adams built the highway. Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Then a day comes when you wonder, what all the fuss was about. I have the fullest confidence that the day will come when people will sit back and wonder, what the fuss was about the GEMS.

Mr. Speaker, I say that because the Leader of the Opposition has asked a number of Parliamentary Questions about the GEMS and I have answered everyone. I have brought documents, sometimes 12 pages of information about every aspect of the GEMS and put them on the table of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in the Board of the GEMS. There is no board in this country of any private company that has among its ranks the dignity of the presence of a former Prime Minister and a former Deputy Prime Minister of the two parties of this country. Sir, a board that has that at its core is likely to be a board of some worth. I have confidence in the financial probriety of the persons who constitute the GEMS and I have confidence in the concept.

Anybody who saw the transformation that has taken place at the Savannah Hotel, a small property on the top of

the hill now transformed into a property that rationalises its access to the beach, will have no doubt that the GEMS has been a catalyst in uplifting the quality of our tourism facilities on the South Coast of Barbados, commensurate with our concept and vision that there should not be two Barbadoses where tourism is concerned, where there is a well developed West Coast and a poverty-stricken South Coast.

Sir, anyone who sees what we have at the GEMS would agree that this is the way in which the South Coast of Barbados should be developed. The Honourable Member for St. John, if nothing else, has a highly developed sense of rumour.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: He also has a highly developed sense of humour too but he also has a highly developed sense of rumour. He knows the real virtue that innuendo can be put to by Opposition parties. The innuendo that something is wrong without saying what the impropriety is, goes a long way in this country.

Mr. Speaker, if there is a difficulty with the GEMS project, it is because we have allowed the GEMS not to be properly capitalized. The Savannah Hotel, Time-Out at the Gap, and the other properties are good properties but they are carrying too much debt in relation to the equity. We did not come to Parliament and ask for the GEMS to be properly capitalized because, perhaps, we were too defensive about it.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: That is the truth. Any business property that carries a lot of debt but little equity in any area, be it tourism or manufacturing, is going to have debt service problems from the start.

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Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: It is what we have done in the case of the Barbados National Bank (BNB) and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). We configured and restructured the balance sheets and that is one of the best means we have put into practice that would otherwise be in a condition where they would not have succeeded. Now is the time to do so while the interest rates are at a rate that would allow for the refinancing of the debt. The Government will convert this substantial portion of that debt into equity, as we should have done from the start, to give the property a chance to succeed.

There are people who saw what the Government has created and marvelled at the quality of what has been done at the Savannah Hotel. There is another project for development which we will support. This country has to stop blowing hot and cold when they speak in terms of how we allow Barbados' properties to be acquired by foreign entities. There was the possibility that the Eastry House property could have gone into foreign hands but the Government acquired it and put it into the portfolio of the GEMS of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, we are being criticised for doing that.

I think this has challenged us to make up our minds on what it is we are about, who we are, or what we want to do. I want to repeat the point. It was not the initial intention to have the Eastry House property for the GEMS portfolio but that West Coast property was in danger of going into foreign hands and we bought it for the GEMS portfolio, and it will be developed.

We will proceed with the development of the property at Dover. This is the spot that was formerly occupied by the Dover Conference Centre. The Government could not afford two conference centres so we had to close one. We did not want to build a monument like the one the Democratic Labour Party built. We could not afford two conference centres and it would have been easier to borrow funds for the development of lands at Dover.

I want to close on the point that I regard as the major substance by the Opposition, concerning the public debt of Barbados, particularly foreign debt. I have already explained to this House the circumstances under which the foreign debt grew. We did not set out at the beginning of the financial year to increase our foreign debt by indulging in commercial borrowing.

Sir, we did so on good advice, at or around the incident of September 11. The advice was that nobody knew how long the crisis was going to last, how difficult it was going to be, how severe it was going to be to tourism activity, and how severe tourism was going to decline in real activity, and the lost of income. Barbados, like Chile and other countries, was advised by our debt managers to go to the market and borrow by way of an insurance policy.

We borrowed \$300 million and we have not spent a penny of it yet. Our public debt has increased, not because of a policy failure or financial extravagance by the Government, but because we borrowed money due to an emergency that simply could not have been ignored. We intend to be responsible with regard to the management of our public debt. We now have \$300 million on our books that we did not anticipate we would have at this time.

The Government has recognised that if we borrow \$300 million and we put it into an account and we do not invest it properly, a day is going to come when we will have difficulty in repaying it. It is the intention of the Government to use some of that money to support investments that can expand the foreign exchange earning capacity of this country to give us the assurance that when the date falls for it to be repaid, there would have been an earning capacity that can support the repayment of the loan.

I have also indicated there were purposes for which the Government would have had to borrow in any event, for example, the expansion of the Grantley Adams International Airport. We are not now going to borrow for that expansion but will use part of the funds already borrowed as a substitute. We are going to put a curb on any new debt that we would have had to incur and use some of what we have already borrowed rather than increasing the existing debt.

I want to re-emphasise that there are activities in which the Government would have been involved, with the understanding that we would have been reimbursed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), leading to an increase in the public debt. The completion of the South Coast Sewerage Project is going to cost over \$15 million.

The Government has already spent its money on this project but it is only a matter for us to discuss with the IADB and the entering of a loan to reimburse us for funds already spent. I am saying it is the policy of the Government that where the Government has already spent money out of its resources, there is no point now in increasing the debt to recover what we have already spent. Therefore, projects such as the South Coast Sewerage Project, Greenland and others, where there was the prospect of our borrowing to reimburse the Government for money already spent, we will not now increase the public debt.

Mr. Speaker, the extent of our reserves is of a nature that Barbados does not have to contemplate any commercial borrowing on the market for capital development purposes nor for balance of payment purposes for a considerable period of time. I stress that the central government's foreign reserves are in excess of \$1.460 billion.

In 1992, in the depth of the crisis, our foreign reserves were \$11 million. We now have \$1.460 billion. There is another \$100 million in the banking system that can be called upon. Mr. Speaker, one thing we are not short of in Barbados is the availability of foreign exchange resources for investment purposes, or for the purpose of carrying out other functions of the Government or civil society.

Sir, we can contemplate for a period, and I would say an extended period of time that there will be no need for the Government of Barbados, certainly for the rest of this term and well into the next term of this Government, to have to go to the market for borrowing. Sir, that is the assurance, given the level of reserves we have.

It is for us to agree as a Parliament, from time to time, on the most judicious investment of the funds that we borrow for emergency purposes. I believe I would have captured the spirit of this debate and set out a clear and exciting programme for the next year.

During the course of the next year there will be certain important stresses at times on the Minister of Finance. In recessionary times one needs to be more circumspect in the Ministry of Finance in managing the resources of the country. We have used a very conservative estimate of revenue. I have indicated to the House, and I do not think any Minister has ever done this before, that there will be an order of priority on coming back to this Parliament, in the event that there is need for some tenders.

I deliberately did not provide EduTech with as much resources as required because I did not think, at the beginning of the year, we had the resources. If the revenue holds up better than we think, I will ask Parliament to agree to a substantial Supplementary for EduTech.

The Ministry of Tourism is developing a programme that will ensure us of substantial growth in arrivals and once the Ministry of Finance has all the details of the programme, the possibility is that, in addition to the \$7 million we have allocated for tourism, we will come back to Parliament and supplement tourism in support of tourism arrivals.

I have announced a \$2 million increase for International Business but this is the year where there must be a quantum leap forward in the International Business environment in this country. I cannot yet say all of what it will entail but in the event there is need for an additional supplementary, resources to convert our OECD triumph into serious activity, I will come back to Parliament and ask for additional resources. I do feel that every Honourable Member in this House deserves to have their constituents well looked after.

4.30 p.m.

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Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I give the House the assurance that it will be a year in which we have still to be circumspect and judicious in the way in which we manage the public finances. This has been a good start to what I hope would be a good debate and I wish the House all the

best. I want just to finish by saying, as I should, that even if we were living in recessionary times and there might have been a little recession in this country, in economic terms there has been no recession in the spirit of this Government and I am obliged to you, Sir, and in that spirit I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, before I move that this House resolve itself into Committee of Supply, it has been brought to my attention that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, Chairman of Committees, is unable to be with us today. In the circumstances, I would wish at this stage to nominate the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. T. GILL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

HEAD 30 - ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this Committee of Supply to defend the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Chambers of the Attorney-General and the various departments falling under that Head. I think it is fair to say that this would be the first opportunity that I would have to define and defend comprehensively the programme and policies of this Ministry since having assumed the Office some months ago, and it is clear that the programme of the Office must relate in a holistic way to the overall defined objectives of the Government as stated so eloquently by the Right Honourable Prime Minister in the Second Reading speeches to the Appropriation Bill, both in his initial speech, and in his winding up speech. There is absolutely no doubt that the times in which we live have presented some challenges in terms of what is available to us financially.

There is absolutely no doubt that the era of uncertainty that presented itself with the September 11th attacks has not really abated, and that the consequences for our region even though we are not in the centre of the troubled area, so to speak, nevertheless are still very much there and run deep in terms of what it imposes upon us administratively, financially and otherwise.

I think it would be fair for me to say to this Committee that as much as almost 50 per cent of my time since assuming this job has been spent dealing with terrorism and money laundering matters, two items which the previous Attorney-General would not have had to face when he first became Attorney-General when this Government became the Government in September, 1994. That statement should give members listening an understanding of the presentation of new challenges that we have continually to be prepared for and that without the expansion substantially of additional human resources, we have had to deal with and prepare Barbados' position both domestically and externally in respect of both of these major issues.

We anticipate that rather than these matters diminishing in respect of our focus that, unfortunately, there will yet be some time when they will remain before us to focus on and be able to expand our programming in respect of them. In some instances, there is genuine domestic need for them but in other instances, it is as a result of our belonging to international organisations whose membership, if we want to keep it, require our participation in these additional types of programmes that relate generally to the security of nations and to the security of individuals.

The times in which we live have led us to the very vexatious question that many countries will have to face as to how the balance should rest between the rights of the State and the rights of individuals and to what extent should we carry the rights of the State as opposed to preserving the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, and whether this is done in the name of national security or otherwise.

While all of this is happening, we still have to face the reality that we have a judicial system that requires considerable effort in respect of an attempt to modernise it. Indeed, if we look at the criminal justice system, too many aspects of our criminal justice system truly are dated in a time and era when the demands were substantially different from those that exist today, when people's pursuit of their normal economic and social activity did not lead to the kind of problems or pressures placed on the criminal justice system, where the range of offences were substantially different whether it is from the penal perspective in respect of our arrangements at the Prisons which were essentially built in the 19th century or whether in respect of our

resources and capacity within the court system or within the Police Force.

The truth is that much has changed in this society over the last 30 years. The notion of drug offences coming before the courts before 1970 was unheard of. Today, drug offences constitute the largest rising group of offences before the law courts in Barbados.

4.40 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The extent of burglaries and robberies has increased commensurate with the increased wealth and ownership of assets in the society. While in the year 2000 we saw reduction in these offences, I am happy to report the reality is that they are still substantially more than they would have been in the 1960s and 1970s.

Sir, we had to determine - in addition to responding to the international needs as they relate to terrorism and security threats, in addition to responding to the new requirements that the Money Laundering Prevention and Control legislation, the Proceeds of Crime Act and all similar pieces of legislation and administrative requirements flowing therefrom have put on us - that we have a changed Barbados with a changed pattern of behaviour.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister spoke at length about the non traditional security threats that this country faces in the form of the illicit drug culture, in the form of crime and violence generally, and in the form of the HIV/AIDS virus, and I would wish to add to that, in the form of reckless behaviour on the roads which leads to the lost of lives that we have seen across this society year after year and, indeed, the consequential increases, I believe, in the cost of insurance and reinsurance for motor vehicles.

Sir, our task is not easy. It requires us to understand these new needs in the context of limited resources, recognising that they are also equally competing demands for Government's monies and recognising that the issues that constitute these non traditional threats to our security very often are inspired by individual behavioural choices of our citizens.

Sir, the truth is, that while we must put mechanisms in place to deal with the consequences of their behaviour, the most appropriate response is to be able to prevent that behaviour in the first place, by helping to change individuals' mind sets, attitudes and values, such that they understand the consequences of their behaviour and their actions when they participate in the use of illicit drugs. Similarly, when they behave in a reckless manner on the

road, when they participate in other forms of illegal activity and when they facilitate money laundering, et cetera.

Sir, building on the work of my predecessor, my Ministry has tried to continue a process which sees us trying to meet the immediate needs at hand, while developing a research capacity that allows us to better understand how the structure of what we have in place can meet the needs of what is on the ground, in terms of law enforcement and the judicial system.

Sir, at the same time, we are cognizant of the fact that the last major revision of our magisterial system was in 1956. Whether you are looking at Barbados in terms of population, in terms of the demographics, in terms of the population density of various areas, or by whatever measurement, 1956 is not 2002. Therefore, there has to be considerable effort in being able to recognise, whether in truth and in fact, the structure of our magisterial districts, as well as the jurisdiction of the courts which was not revised since 1956, however, in fact meets the demands of the activities within this country today that comes before it on a daily basis.

At the same time, the Supreme Court of Judicature would have been established in the 1950s also, and we have also to look at the High Court system to determine whether in truth and in fact, that too is meeting the demands.

Once again, the Prime Minister would have indicated, very clearly, that this country will be focussing a lot more effort, during the course of this year, on being able to attract higher levels of international business, that we already have a level that sees 40 per cent of our corporation taxes coming from companies involved in the sale of international financial services, and that in circumstances where you are seeking to attract and widen the base for business, then, one of the things that any investor would be interested in is the quality of your judicial system, the level of transparency within your judicial system and, indeed, Mr. Chairman, the speed with which a person can have a matter resolved within the judicial system.

Unfortunately, we have had a number of complaints over the years that we have simply been taking too long to be able to see matters put on for hearing, as well as to receive decision. I trust, Mr. Chairman, that this is a matter that we can assist in resolving by the extent to which we employ a variety of administrative and technological solutions, such that we can increase the productivity within the system.

Let me go back to explain what I mean. There has been limited computerisation within the court system. A decision was taken some years ago to computerise the records, the vital statistics in the Registry and that was

completed in terms of marriage certificate, birth certificates, death certificates, et cetera, so that you can go and apply for it and it is given to you.

The second phase of that was the computerisation of the Probate Section. Indeed, Mr. Chairman, what is available to persons now will ensure a greater savings in time in respect to accessing copies of wills, et cetera, having a complete data base available on line and, essentially, improving the efficiency of the Registry in dealing with persons who have concerns in the Probate Section.

Sir, we have not yet gone to the stage of an effective computerised case management system and we have not yet gone to the stage, Mr. Chairman, where persons can file documents electronically, which in today's age, should be exactly where we should be, given the fact that you can do that with almost any other private sector institution that is serious about e-commerce and e-technology.

It therefore means that the judicial system has, rapidly, to change systems that existed for decades, to accommodate greater levels of productivity within the system such that the issues of delays within the judicial system, will not be a drag on Barbados' competitiveness as an international financial services sector. It is the intention of this ministry, over the next two years, to ensure that we can embark upon this process.

Part of this is provided for in the IADB project, part of it has to be provided for outside, but the starting point is that certainly, in addition to the court system, the Chambers of the Attorney-General must be computerised.

One of the things that struck me, Mr. Chairman, was that there was no single place where I could find all of the matters in which the Crown was involved, whether in terms of cases already filed or whether in terms of matters in which liability was being alleged, but no case had yet been filed. Therefore, if you do not know what you have, it is very difficult to prioritise how you deal with your case load.

Therefore, one of the first things I have tried to do is put all of that in one place, such that we can start to take serious decisions about being able to manage the case load, to deal with the issues in which there are genuinely instances where the Government is liable, without having to delay litigants further, but also to fight those matters in which people are really trying to allege liability and which we do not agree that there is a case to be admitted.

By the same token, Mr. Chairman, that requires the acquisition of not only hardware, software and the networking, it requires training. Therefore, the issue of training in the context of this year, both in terms of the

professionals, the lawyers, as well as the support staff, both in the Chambers as well as among those employed at the Registry, is going to be absolutely critical if we are to utilise these new technological solutions to the maximum.

4.50 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, as I said earlier, it is not only technological solutions that we need to bring to bear, but the administrative and rules-based solutions as well. We have new draft rules of the Supreme Court in our possession now which are intended to allow for a more efficient process of case management in respect of the High Court.

We have established a Rules Committee which is now meeting under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice. They will be meeting every Saturday morning for the next couple of months to go through the draft rules to ensure their appropriateness so that when they recommend it to us, we can then take the necessary steps in order to have those rules finalised. That would require a substantial amount of training, not just for those officers within the employ of the Crown or for the judges but indeed for the entire private Bar. We want to ensure that we do not make the same mistakes which Trinidad and Tobago made in respect of their introduction of the new rules of the Supreme Court.

Equally, we recognise that there is an important role in there for some decisions to be made as it relates to some Government issues because there is a role for a Master in Chambers who would effectively be able to shift through a lot of the matters before they reach the High Court to ensure that those matters on which there is a true determination of facts and law would be the ones to reach the High Court and, therefore, would reduce some of the clogging that currently exists in the system.

Sir, once we can start the work on the new judicial complex and have it completed quickly, it would allow us to increase the number of judges. I readily admit that we need to look at increasing the number of judges at both the High Court and the Court of Appeal because the volume of cases being filed in the Registry in Barbados is substantially higher than it was 10 or 20 years ago. We also have to ensure that we do not starve the system by not having a sufficient number of persons to hear these matters in an appropriate time frame. I must stress that this will also mean that we will have to review the hours of work.

While I have heard that persons will need time to write judgements in the afternoon and all of that, I really must confess, Mr. Chairman, that I genuinely believe that all courts in Barbados should sit for a full day. Down in the islands and in other jurisdictions, they sit for a full day.

When I did my tutelage in London, we had to work with courts sitting a full day. What happens is that you will take your lunch and come back and sit for the rest of the day. This is a matter that is going to require dialogue and a settlement of these issues.

Mr. Chairman, there is a matter which I have raised with both the former Chief Justice and the present Chief Justice that has to do with the extent of how we manage the timing of vacation in the system. While I appreciate, Mr. Chairman, that matters pertaining to the management of judges do not necessarily fall within my portfolio, I use this opportunity to express my opinion only and to simply say that I do not believe that we should have a system where persons can take vacation at any time such that it requires us to appoint acting judges.

I believe we should move to a situation where we take a specified block of time within the year and other than the two judges who would be on call for that period of time, that all judges should take their vacation during that period of time as is happening in other jurisdictions including Trinidad and Tobago. I believe if we can do that as well as expand the hours of work, even while I recognise the need for additional judges, that we would be able to expand the productivity of the court system considerably.

I trust these are matters on which we can proceed if we have the appropriate dialogue and the appropriate agreement with the appropriate authority, but I will say nothing more on that issue right now.

Mr. Chairman, those supporting entities for the courts have to be considered also. In the year 2002 Barbados should not have to be relying on somebody's memory or somebody having to go to check a book to see if a fine has been paid or not. There is too much access to technology and too many computers out there for that to still be happening. From the time a magistrate or a court issues a sentence, that information should be put on the computer so that persons who are capable of accessing that information will be able to know whether a person has breached the order of the court by failing to pay the fine.

I hope in the course of the next year that we can put two things in place. The first one is to have a clear computerised system of accounting such that fines can be recorded when the orders are given by the court and when the fines are paid that it can be recorded also and if it has not been paid, then the appropriate instruction would go to the persons who have to enforce the other aspect of the order.

Secondly, I hope to put an arrangement in place for the mailing of maintenance cheques to persons rather than making persons incur expenditure by leaving home to come down to town to get them in the first place, not knowing if

it is there, and then if it is not there, to come back two and three times for the same cheque while standing up in the hot sun waiting until it can be prepared and taking time away from work and invariably sometimes not being paid for the time that they take away from work.

I am saying that the technology is available and we have simply to reorganise our functions to ensure that those two basic objectives are met. If I achieve nothing else in the Registry the next year, Mr. Chairman, those are the two things that must be done. Women and men in this country who apply for maintenance should be able, unless there is a problem that requires their attendance at the courts, to receive the cheques at home just as they receive pension cheques. This is not beyond our capacity.

Mr. Chairman, all orders of the court that relate to fines and/or confinement should be recorded so that these matters can be expedited and I hope that these Estimates would allow us to move in that direction. By the same token, Mr. Chairman, there must be the establishment of a comprehensive criminal justice information system. Resources do not allow us to start and complete it all in this financial year but they do allow us to start it and to go a long way toward the sharing of the information. From the time a person is arrested and charged, there should be information that can be shared from the point of arrest back to the end of the conviction or the deployment of the sentence. There should be a common platform on which all of these entities, the police, the courts and the prisons, can speak to ensure that there is the greatest productivity in dealing with these matters.

5.00 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: One of the things that astounded me as well was that there was no information as to the rate of recidivism that could have been presented to me in respect of persons going back up to Glendairy, having been there already. We have now put a system in place where, hopefully, this information can be collected and within six months, we should be in a position to genuinely know what is the rate of recidivism. That is important because there is the perception that it is all young people who are going there all the time but invariably the numbers may not be as high as we might otherwise think.

The truth is that anybody who is speaking today on the matter really is speaking on the basis of speculation because the data has not been put in a format such that we can understand truly what is the rate of recidivism. What we do have is, of course, data on who went to prison and when they went. It has not been collated. It is in some big books. Colonel Nurse, as I know, has put some system in place since January where we can have this information

computerised and, as I said, I hope that within six months I will be able to speak more authoritatively on the basis of what truly is the rate of recidivism in Barbados, but we need to know. We also need to know from the point of view - and when we come to the Ministry of Home Affairs, we will talk more about our rehabilitation programme and working with the same.

In respect of the Magistrates' Courts, I would have indicated in here recently that it is the intention of this Ministry to establish a permanent Coroner's Court with islandwide jurisdiction. The truth is that the number of cases to be heard is somewhere near 300 cases. It is at an unacceptable level. We believe there is enough work, even when the backlog is taken off, that persons could work on a regular basis dealing with all inquests. What most people in Barbados do not know is that anytime a death occurs and there is uncertainty as to the reason for that death, then there must be a coroner's inquest and very often, it holds up the settlement of that estate and other matters to the family because it does not allow them to bring closure to the issues.

I trust that the Ministry of Housing which has been, for the last five weeks, dealing with accommodation for the Coroner's Court, will soon put us in a position that we can have that court established in the soonest possible time. The post for the Magistrate is available. We will have funds in this year's Estimates and will be able to hire the ancillary staff to run the court. It is just a question of settling on the location which we believe should be in Bridgetown, given the fact that this Coroner will have island-wide jurisdiction.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I see that there is certain precision to new eyes, Sir.

Sir, maybe I should come back and deal with the police because there is a lot to be said on them specifically. In addition to the lawyers and the law courts, in the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) the Prime Minister indicated yesterday that one of the things we have now to perfect is the export of services and in the context of the CSME, there really has to be a call to all persons selling services - and I am speaking now with specific reference to lawyers and ancillary legal services - to recognise that there has to be some level of exporting of these services on a more comprehensive and cohesive basis. There are a few number of lawyers going down to the Islands to do an odd case here and there, some have a few more than others, but I do not know of any law firm in Barbados that has set up itself with specific reference to be able to generate substantial business outside of Barbados in respect of CSME to take advantage of those things.

Sir, what implications it has for my Office and Ministry is that we need to review the Legal Profession Act. I have indicated that I have asked Mr. Leslie Haynes to act as Chairman of that Committee, largely because the Bar has also started to do some work on it, and he would have started to do work on behalf of the Bar. The Committee will be formalised shortly and I hope that in early April I can meet with them, giving them some time in which to report back because there are a number of issues that are going to require review.

Once again, there is the question of the existence of a single Disciplinary Committee at a time when we now have in excess of 400 lawyers on the Roll. Is that, in fact, meeting the needs of the times, or is that a requirement that is simply there in form, but has now found to be wanting given the increased litigious nature of the Barbadian society and the extent to which people are prepared to file complaints against lawyers when they feel that their services are not being dealt with?

Sir, on the issue of continuous Assizes, the Honourable Chief Justice, on his first day in addressing the Court has indicated that we would be in a position this year to see the establishment of a continuous criminal High Court, ensuring that we cannot have backlogs of cases simply because the Assizes only meets 4 times a year. There is nothing about Barbados' organization today, or its economic and social activity that requires us to keep a system of Assizes.

The truth is that with crime having increased at the extent to which it has, one has to recognize that the most effective deterrent to criminal activity is the fact that you will simply prosecute someone in respect of the crime they have committed. If people feel they will commit a crime and do not get prosecuted for four or five years, then they will do it with impunity, but if they realise that between the point of arrest and the point of sentence, not more than nine months to a year might elapse, these persons will think twice - not that they should not be doing it in the first place, but they will think twice just as you are causing me to think twice and I will sit and come again, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to speak in general terms because I know that the Minister wants to complete the presentation. I also know that my good friend from St. Michael West was deprived of the opportunity earlier and we want to hear him today.

First of all, let me say to the Minister that I hope even though she is still in the honeymoon period in this Ministry, her tenure there will not be characterised as a regime of talk, as might have been the characterisation of it previously. I hope that the issues and suggestions, as well as the announcement of policies by the Minister will be

transformed into actual results at the end of the day because for the past eight years, we have spent a lot of time talking around a lot of the issues that are important, particularly under this Head of the Attorney- General.

We talked about increasing efficiency in the court, Her Majesty Prisons, the Royal Barbados Police Force, in fact, all of these things. I do not think there has ever been an Estimates debate since 1994 in which we did not debate this particular Head and in which we were not under a deluge of more talk about the status of the so-called reforms that were being announced on a regular basis. Therefore, I am placing the most characterable construction, not only on the honeymoon but I hope that the Honourable Member will be able to see the results.

Sir, just in the past few weeks, we had a debate in here where we spoke of methods by which we could improve the administration of justice in the Magistrates Courts. At that time I made four recommendations to which the Minister said she would have addressed during the Estimates debates.

One of them related to the appointment of prosecutors to deal with Magistrates Courts matters, one related to the more efficient centralisation of the Magistrates Courts without removing the magisterial district and one related to the creation of a special court. I have noticed in this particular presentation the Minister spoke about a Coroner's Court which will deal across jurisdictions with the coroner's matters. I had even recommended a court to deal with bails and other kinds of applications which would not then clog up the other courts creating problems.

5.10 p.m.

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Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, you could not pass by Boarded Hall Police Station this morning. Obviously, it must have been a call day so that was a wasted day in the life of a magistrate who had cases set down and lawyers would have been there only to receive a date.

We have to find more impressive and efficient ways of dispensing with matters such as these in our system. This is the computer age and we should find an easier way of disseminating information across the legal fraternity saving cost both to the people who run businesses that relate to the administration of justice, as well as to Government, or else we would be wasting time in this House.

At the end of the Honourable Member's presentation she spoke about law firms in Barbados not looking

outwards. This is quite true and I have lamented it for a long time. Therefore, the Government should be looking at setting up a committee to revise the rules. Sir, it is not about Barbadians looking to export services because that is only one side of the equation that is going to be relevant since we have always had in Barbados a few firms that had a regional genesis, and even though the character of the firm was not regional, the point is that we should view the rest of the Caribbean as a potential market for legal services as well as persons from Jamaica and Guyana are entitled to view Barbados as a market for their legal services.

There is every likelihood that the legal profession in Barbados is going to be subject to significant competition from attorneys from other jurisdictions who would be entitled under the Caribbean Single Market and Economy to bring specialised or basic skills to compete with Barbadian lawyers on a daily basis. Therefore, you have to find a way domestically to accommodate that and, therefore, that committee needs to consider how they are going to deal with rules applicable to practitioners called to the Bar here whose firms are located elsewhere in the region but who may have active practice here in Barbados as one of the features of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the Caribbean Court of Justice. I notice that \$145 000 has been provided in this year's Estimates as start-up cost. I notice that a similar amount was provided last year as well as the year before. I would like to know from the Minister what we are paying for at this time relative to the Caribbean Court of Justice and what is the status of the creation of the Caribbean Court of Justice.

I understood the Honourable Member for St. Peter in his previous presentation to say that it was impossible to have the Caribbean Single Market and Economy come on stream without a court of original jurisdiction to deal with matters under the Protocols for the CARICOM Treaty. Therefore, this means that there has to be a finite period within which this court is going to have to be operational. We need to know whether it is likely that other countries in the Caribbean will be putting up the resources to support the court and whether arrangements are being made to staff the court and get the physical infrastructure put in place.

Another initiative which Parliament supported during the course of this year was amendment to the Money Laundering legislation in Barbados. As much as we support the amendments on this side, concerns were raised about the manner in which the amendments would affect normal transactions in Barbados.

I have noticed some disparity in the way in which the financial institutions in Barbados are handling these

transactions. Some banks in Barbados are requiring you, even when you are dealing with a cheque from another financial institution, to fill out a declaration. Sir, I am not talking about cash transactions. I am talking about transactions involving cheques between lawyers from financial institutions to other lawyers, but other banks are not requiring this.

I want to know if the Money Laundering Authority has been established and whether the objective of this Money Laundering Authority was to create a situation in which there has to be a declaration for every cheque being deposited. I assume that was not the intention when the legislation was passed even though we pointed out that the kinds of transactions that take place in Barbados that an upper limit of \$10 000 was far too small. It has added a whole new tier of cost to the banking system, to practitioners, to business people who deal with large transactions where there is an evidence of a paper trail and there is no necessity for those kinds of impositions to be placed on the way people do business.

I am not saying that we should relax our rules to facilitate illegal activities. I do not support that at all, but I know that other countries which have offshore sectors have put in place Money Laundering legislation with rules that do not require that level of reporting. The question is: does it make you a less competitive or attractive jurisdiction when you place those impositions on people doing business especially when they are entirely unnecessary?

Under the National Task Force on Crime Prevention, I have noticed a big jump in the allocation most of which comes under the item of Plant, Equipment and Furniture. The Minister should explain to the House what is happening here.

5.20 p.m.

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Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: There was a big jump in the allocation to about \$300 000, most of which come under Plant, Equipment and Furniture. I think that the Minister should explain to the House what is happening there.

I also notice under the IADB Justice Improvement Project, that the programme statement says that the purpose of this project is to assist the Government in its efforts to modernise the justice sector through improving court administration and processes, enhancing access to justice, and reducing economic and social costs associated with criminal behaviour. That is a large mouthful by any standards. Therefore, I would like to find out from the Minister what is happening this year with this project? What specific activities are being undertaken and what

areas of Government activity will benefit from the \$1.5 million that has been provided in these Estimates?

There is also provision being made for the Police Complaints Authority of approximately \$200 000. I know that we passed the relevant legislation recently but I would like the Minister to indicate what is proposed relative to the operation of the Police Complaints Authority? For example, where will it be located and what its features will be? Because there is no explanatory note, certainly not in my copy, to support the \$175 000 that has been provided for the Police Complaints Authority.

Sir, as I said earlier, I hope that the Minister will also respond to the concerns that were raised previously to which the Honourable Member said that she made a note relative to the operation of the Magistrates' Courts in Barbados and what qualitative improvements are being considered by the Ministry.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, let me say to the Honourable Member for St. John, through you, Mr. Chairman, that I welcome his announcement that I am still on a honeymoon and, therefore, look forward to that honeymoon not reaching the stage of divorce soon. I can give him the assurance that his own memory should provide him with the answer whether I should be talking and no action, or whether action should be the order of the day. Sir, from the time I entered this Honourable Chamber in 1994, my first major action was associated with the Honourable Member for St. John and the kola syrup scandal.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, there is not really much a divide on what has been said. There is one major point of difference between what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has said and what I have indicated, that is, on the issue whether there should be centralised Magistrates, Courts or not.

The Leader of the Opposition feels that even if we keep separate magisterial districts, that there should all be located in the City. As I indicated, I genuinely feel that the physical presence of a magistrate in a district is important towards setting the tone and tenure of behaviour in that district. I also feel that it is important for the magistrate to understand the character of the district, the characters of the district as well and to be able to make judgements of facts based on local knowledge.

I have indicated that this is not a matter on which I would seek to impose my personal views. We will do some level of wide consultation on it. We recognise that there maybe some financial savings in terms of placing them in one location, but the question is, what do you give up in

terms of removing them from the presence of District "E" in terms of St. Peter, and St. Lucy, or what you lose in terms of removing them from St. Philip in District "C".

I have said in this Honourable House before that there is need for a review and audit of all police stations and the locations of those police stations as well as the physical facilities. If we were to build a police station from scratch today in St. Philip, it would not be on District "C" Hill. It would have to be located at Six X Roads, St. Philip. There has to be a systematic review and audit, not just of the quality of the physical facilities but also of the location of the police stations.

The Hastings Police Station has to be removed from that location. Mr. Chairman, we really need a police station in the vicinity of Harts Gap/St. Matthias area in respect of that police presence there. The Prime Minister would have announced that we are building a new police station at Tamarind Hall, St. Joseph later this year and we should probably start construction in the second half of the financial year. The plans have already been completed.

With respect to the audit queries that the Prime Minister referred to, and the Leader of the Opposition has not yet referred to, I understand, having enquired, that these are the same audit queries from the year 2000 and that the responses were sent to the Auditor-General. Sir, whether the Auditor-General saw the responses or not, I do not know. The responses will be laid in this House because they do, apparently, lay appropriate accusations. In some instances it is not Tamarind Hall project that the Auditor-General should be referring to because those designers never worked on the Tamarind Hall project.

Sir, in another instance there was a case where the contract was less than \$5 000 which, as you know, the Financial Rules do not require certain activity on. I think we need a separate debate to deal with comments of the Auditor-General. I look forward to being able to give a comprehensive response on that.

Sir, on the issue of bail applications and remands, this is a matter we can discuss. There maybe some merit in this because part of the problem in the court is the level of people coming in and out of the court all the time. It maybe appropriate that we can reach a stage where we can set times for the hearing of cases. I do not know what is so difficult about being able to say that a case would start at 9:00 o'clock but you will have another person in reserve in the event that case falls through. We have to schedule cases to get greater levels or productivity from the lawyers, court, prison officers and the witnesses.

I hope that during the reorganisation of the work of the Magistrates' Courts that we can develop a call-system so that all persons do not have to come to court at 9:00

o'clock and waste time. This system can also apply in the Assizes or the High Court where you can have a better scheduling of times.

Mr. Chairman, all the lawyers are virtually located within a square mile of the courts. Therefore, it should not be difficult in a country the size of Barbados to be able to effect the system which reduces the wastage of time lost that the court system sees at the moment.

In respect of the Caribbean Court of Justice, let me say that I have, this year, had the opportunity to meet with the Preparatory Committee of the Caribbean Court of Justice as Chairman of that Committee, having taken over from the previous Attorney-General. The Committee is currently working to settle the process of funding for the court. The other major drafting of the documents and rules have been completed and the order of work in respect of getting to the inauguration has also been completed.

5.30 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: We have now to settle the issue of the funding of the court. This court is required, if we are going to have an appropriate dispute mechanism for the Single Market and Economy in its original jurisdiction, but there are also a number of countries that have indicated that they would wish to have it as their final appellate court. Not all countries want it as their final appellate, but most do. The truth is that we have, over the next few months, to settle the issue of the funding of the court with finality such that the appropriate financial instruments can be drafted and, if necessary, trust instruments can also be completed and have this matter signed off by Heads of Government on the basis of recommendations both from the preparatory committee of the CCJ as well as the appropriate Ministries of Finance of the various territories.

The sum of money that is in the Estimates is, in fact, to continue the preparatory work. As you would be aware, there are a number of public education sessions throughout the region. The way in which we are charged is based on a formula so that it is not an exact amount that is linked directly to how much activity takes place within Barbados itself but it is on the basis of a CARICOM formula worked out. In fact, I believe it is intended that the preparatory Committee should be having some seminars and workshops in Grenada and St. Vincent next week in respect of the court but there are some countries that would still require referenda in order to establish the Court as a court in their jurisdiction and we anticipate that will not happen before the settlement of the funding arrangement. That really is the issue at hand now.

In respect of the issue of money laundering, let me say what the banks have been doing in Barbados. Only last week, on two separate occasions, I had reason to speak to this issue. I must be frank with this Chamber, Mr. Chairman. Sometimes we go too far west in trying to go east. The truth is that the legislation does not require banks to do anything other than file on suspicious activity. Suspicious activity means that you basically have to know your customers and know them when something alerts you. It means also that you have guidelines which have been prepared to help the banks "operationalise" these new systems.

I do believe that there is a level of blind enforcement in respect of the arrangements such that it is going to act as a disincentive in doing good, traditional, normal and legal business in this economy. Only last week in the committee which we established to prepare us for the mutual evaluation, I brought it to the attention of both the Central Bank representative as well as the representative of the private banking community. Then on Wednesday night when I did a lecture on money laundering at UWI, I raised the matter again.

The truth is that people have to use common sense in applying any rules. There are stories of banks in town issuing a certified banker's cheque upstairs in one department, persons going downstairs to open a new account with a cheque from the same bank, at the same bank, and the bank telling them to fill out forms to let them know where is the source of the funds when they know that they had the funds in their account for years, that they were changing it only because the person had died and yet they came downstairs to ask the person to fill out the same thing. Now, that cannot be the intent of the legislation.

Therefore, what we are asking people to do is to exercise their discretion. We are not interested in knowing people's business in terms of normal and legitimate activity. That is not the interest of the State. What we are interested in is being able to pick up suspicious activity and large amounts of funds moving through an account that would not otherwise carry that level of activity without there being a justifiable legal reason for those funds moving through that account.

I, therefore, believe that we are going to have to have more workshops and seminars to work through the teething problems of the implementation of it and the implications are becoming more and more dire because

I do not know how many Honourable Members have really familiarised themselves with the terms of the USA Patriot Act. The truth is that the levels of regulation and supervision within our economy are becoming more and more subject to outside review and that the determination and judgments made either by independent inter-

governmental bodies such as FATF, or OECD, or FSF, or the United States Treasury itself may lead to negative actions being taken against normal, legitimate business activity on the part of the financial sector in this country and other territories across the world.

They are trying to reach offshore shell corporations. They are trying to reach those jurisdictions they feel have not put sufficient supervisory and regulatory powers in place to be able to conduct appropriate due diligence and enhanced due diligence. In certain circumstances, they will prohibit or will require enhanced due diligence, or they will prohibit activities allowing their banks to be correspondent banks for foreign financial institutions, and they are carrying the level of supervision even further because they recognise that in some instances those foreign banks already act as correspondent banks themselves to other banks. Very often, they have not been following the full chain and we have to become very deliberate and diligent, not only in our supervisory and regulatory capacity.

At the same time, we have also to be proactive in lobbying the extent to which Barbados has always been and wants to maintain a reputation as a clean jurisdiction and a jurisdiction in which there is substantive business being carried out generally within the international financial services sector, but as a jurisdiction that is not going to go overboard to prevent legitimate business from being carried out in the name of the application of the letter of the Law.

I hope that we can strike this balance that keeps the integrity of our jurisdiction, the integrity of our supervisory and regulatory systems, but at the same time recognising that there cannot be a blind application of the Law such that it prevents persons from doing legitimate business without having to incur extreme costs.

In respect of the National Task Force on Crime Prevention, there is a substantial increase. I have not been able to come to the police yet, but in respect of law enforcement and research capacity, the major initiative of the Ministry this year is the establishment of the anti-robbery campaign and the continuation of the anti-burglary campaign. The anti-robbery campaign is both a campaign designed for law enforcement and for prevention reasons and essentially our research has shown that 80 per cent of the robberies in Barbados take place from the Cheapside area to the River Road Bus Stand, but looking both at Fairchild Street and Constitution Road as you come off Broad Street as well as between Lower Bay Street and Oistins on that South Coast trip, including the loop with St. Lawrence Gap and some of the other gaps in Dover and Maxwell.

Eighty per cent of the robberies committed in this country are committed in those two areas: Bridgetown and Cheapside, the two bus stands essentially, as well as Lower

Bay Street to Oistins with the loop of St. Lawrence Gap and some of those other side roads, Maxwell, Dover, Hart's Ga and St. Matthias, all the ones close to the coast not far off the coast road.

What we have designed is a programme that will see us doing a number of things, some of which I do not want to speak about, Mr. Chairman, as you would appreciate but what I can say to you is that we would be buying and installing in Bridgetown, first of all, close circuit television which will allow us to be able to pick up activity and the Royal Barbados Police Force along with the Task Force on Crime Prevention will be manning the monitoring of the cameras.

In addition to that, we will be increasing the level of patrols both on foot and in cars in those areas, because robbery is the one offence in Barbados where there are more victims who are non-Barbadians than there are Barbadians who suffer from it. In other words, it is the one offence that affects tourists as opposed to Barbadians.

5.40 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, whether it is a Barbadian or a tourist we do not want any of that here and part of the problem is that we have a low detection rate on robberies, because invariably, when you are robbed, you are usually taken by surprise, so you cannot usually give the best ID evidence. Therefore, we believe that by both obvious cameras, as well as hidden cameras, we can pick up more of the activity in the general areas, such that it would aid the police in bringing a closure to their investigation.

Equally, we have an anti-burglary campaign. That is the one which affects more Barbadian households, although, I must say for the record, Mr. Chairman, that both robbery and burglary came down last year. In the year 2001, in the Bridgetown Division, there were only 215 cases, as opposed to 275 cases a year before, of serious bodily harm. In respect of robbery, there were 312 cases last year, instead of 428 the year before. In respect of burglary of residences, there were 1 920 cases, as opposed to 2 159 the year before, a reduction of more than 10 per cent. In respect of burglary of buildings, there were 646 cases, as opposed to 685 cases.

I only want to say, Mr. Chairman, that it hurts me greatly that two or three years ago, the Prime Minister stood in here and introduced a system of fiscal incentives for businesses to be able to better protect themselves, as well as residences. The ultimate protection is really for the individual to take the precautionary measures. Our research is showing is that very often, 80 per cent of burglary of

dwelling houses occur during the day between 6 o'clock in the morning and 5 o'clock in the evening.

Invariably, it is poor security features or poor design of the house that facilitated the offence, but more importantly, when the offence occurred during the time that somebody was at home, it was complacency on the part of that person who was home, that led the person to be able to get into the house. Sir, all we are saying is that we have a larger number of people who believe that they can go in people's houses and take away things from them.

The society has traditionally been accustomed to being very lapsed about security. We, as individuals, now have to recognise that the police are responsible for your not being robbed or burgled. They can be responsible for helping you to catch the person, but you have to take certain basic steps to protect and secure yourself. None of us are going to go home and leave windows opened and doors unlocked at night while you are sleeping and do not expect people to come in.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: It is now 5.50 p.m. and we have to be moving on.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Yes, Sir.

What we will do, Sir, is to ensure that we take personal responsibility for our own security and safety. I only want to say, Sir, that the anti-burglary project is being piloted in Grazettes and Bush Hall but I have every confidence to believe that once we finish the pilot, we can come into areas like Carrington Village, Harts Gap and Hindsbury Road, and even parts of the South Coast and West Coasts that have been troubled by burglaries and robberies.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I know you are waxed and warm. I would be grateful if you could get to my constituency.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I am coming to Carrington's Village very soon with it, Sir. Sir, when I come back, I want to talk about drug trafficking, in particular.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make an intervention in this Head, as it relates to the Royal Barbados Police Force and the Magistrates' Courts. I would say, Sir, that the Royal Barbados Police Force does a good job. Regarding the members of the Force, I can also say that I know good of many and harm of none.

When I was a little boy, people would say that in order to be a policeman, all you had to do "was to have a big foot, plenty bronze and no brain". Today, Sir, that is something of the past and I can say to you, that the Royal Barbados Police Force has talent, well-educated men and

women who care about the members of the community. As I said, I know they are doing a good job with an interest in upholding law and order.

The Ministry of Public Works and Transport is the Ministry responsible for the roads and the traffic of Barbados and quite often, we have to work with the members of the Police Force in certain areas. When we were looking at the introduction of the seat belt legislation, we had many meetings with the gazetted officers of the Police Force. We also have to work with them when we have to look at matters relating to the Rally Club of Barbados when they have complaints and we are looking at solutions of these problems. I can say that there is always some relationship with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force.

When we come here and pass legislation in both Houses, we pass laws and these laws then, Sir, have to be interpreted by the courts of the land. The policemen play an important role at court, because when laws are broken, and people responsible for the breaking of these laws are charged, these charges are laid by the police and then the courts have to make the decision of whether a person is guilty as charged, or that person is innocent. It is also the court that makes the determination on how the punishment is dispensed.

The Royal Barbados Police Force is responsible for enforcement of the laws while the Ministry of Public Works and Transport has the responsibility for the upkeep of roads and sidewalks, as I said already, and also parking.

5.50 p.m.

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Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: Quite often we are seeing a number of people parking large heavy vehicles on the sidewalks and very often these vehicles damage the grills on the sidewalks which expose people to danger. Very often we get claims coming to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport by the general public for injuries they received when they slip and fall into these broken grills on the sidewalks. For the last couple of weeks, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport has been repairing these broken culverts and grills. Right now on the Spring Garden Highway approaching the lights by the Holbourne Circle we are repairing about 15 grills in that area and this is a cost to Government in two ways. Firstly, we have to find the money to repair these grills and, secondly, people are making claims against the Government and when these claims are investigated and the Ministry is liable, the Government has to compensate these people.

The police should enforce the law and stop these people from parking on the sidewalks and in other areas where they should not be parking. At present there is ongoing dialogue between the Royal Barbados Police Force and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport as it pertains to parking, and the issue of the sanitation trucks going into Swan Street to remove the garbage from the business places.

The other thing I want to touch on relates to the public service vehicles. It is a known fact that the drivers of these public service vehicles strive on breaking the laws, and it is heartbreaking to hear when they are taken before the courts on charges that they have 50 or 60 traffic convictions. It is also heartbreaking to know that these persons can go before the law courts and still be able to be out on the road driving a public service vehicle.

The other thing I want to mention is that some time ago money was voted for the employment of special constables to work in the bus terminals to control the same public service vehicles and commuters using those vehicles but it seems that these special constables are slowly disappearing from the role they were employed to perform and I would like the police to pay some attention to it.

Mr. Chairman, I know there are complaints from the police to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport as it relates to ordinary people who are reported for traffic offences. These persons are asked to take their licences and insurances to a police station but the policeman who reported the person is usually not at the same station when the particulars are produced and, therefore, is not in a position to say whether the person who ultimately produces the licence is really the driver of the vehicle. These are things the police are concerned about and the Ministry is working on it. We have to look at it and introduce some of the measures that obtain in other parts of the world. In Trinidad and Tobago it is law that when you are driving in your vehicle you must carry your insurance and your driver's licence with you at all times and it is an offence not to travel with these documents.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You have two minutes more.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I want to say to the police that we are cooperating with them to make it easier for them to do their job.

Mr. Chairman, this is my first intervention but I will come back as we get further into the Heads.

6.00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I could not miss the opportunity of speaking after the Minister of Public Works and I am very sorry that the Member for St. Michael North East is not in position at this particular point in time. Sir, I would like to know from the Honourable Minister the amount of money that is repaid to the Police Force on a yearly basis through the Public Works Ministry because if one looks on page 146, Section 211 - Maintenance of Police Vehicles - one will recognise that Head has increased by 27.6 per cent and it is not any fault of the Police Force. The truth is, because of the bad roads that the Honourable Member who just sat, who said that he had discussions with the police, has now caused this particular Head to increase by 27.6 per cent, which means that because the Police Force as it stands responds with quick responses and because of the conditions of the roads, one will recognise that the repair bill is now very high. Sir, I am hoping that the Ministry of Public Works would understand the particular problem and the expectations. If they do not understand the expectations of the public of Barbados, they understand that the Police Force must be able to travel on proper roads so that they can execute their duties.

Sir, I would hope that in recognising this, that on the next occasion the Minister of Public Works is in discussion with the Attorney-General...

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: On a point of order, Sir. I am hoping that the Honourable Minister will help me. Although I have been in this Honourable House for some time, I find it a little difficult to follow through some of the things.

The Honourable Member said at page 146 of the Estimates, under Subhead 211, that there is an increase. There has been an increase but he has put it down solely to the fact that there has been an increase in the maintenance of vehicles because of the roads but this item includes: provision for maintaining office equipment and furniture, meeting the cost of service agreement, provision to meet the cost of the motor insurance relating to police vehicles, maintain motor vehicles, purchase gasoline, lubricants, oils, stags, batteries in motor vehicles.

I wish that the Honourable Member would give the Committee the basis of his submission and how much money he knows has been voted for, what particular purpose and whether the other items are not included.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. He is quite aware that prior to this, we have had many Supplementaries for large repair bills and as far as I can remember one happened to be at the repair station at Warrens, belonging to Barbados Shipping and Trading where, at one stage, the former Attorney-General said the reason why the vehicles were there was because we did not

budget the money for the high levels of expenses and that the vehicles could not be released by the particular repair station because he first had to come for a Supplementary.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West fully remembers that, and seeing that he was fully aware of that, knew that I would remember, that is why he made the point so that I can strengthen my particular point against the Minister of Public Works.

Sir, I am also hoping he would understand that the large claims now coming to the Public Works Ministry are not only coming from the public of Barbados but also the Government Departments have a right to submit their claims and reclaim some of that money so that particular Head would not be so large. We should be seeing a counter charge, where the police should be allowed to send the repair bill to the Public Works Ministry and this increase would not be reflected.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West is also aware that this Head also includes gasoline and diesel and that those particular items have decreased in cost. If there was not a decrease in cost, then this Head would have been much higher and therefore the argument by the Honourable Member does not stand up.

Sir, I am also saying to the Attorney-General, that we are having a serious drug problem in Barbados, and it seems to be in those areas where we have a large mass of water in particular areas. As you know, St. Lucy happens to be that particular area and I am saying, as I said to a previous Attorney-General in here when he said that because of the low level of crime in St. Lucy there was no need for the Crab Hill Police Station, I had mentioned to him at that point in time that there is a need for the police station at Crab Hill for the simple reason; even though the crime level relating to normal crime was not high but because of the number of landings that it was very important to keep a police station to the north of Barbados.

Sir, I will even expand on this particular point now. We are having a serious problem in the north of Barbados where District 'E' Police Station is not suitable to house anybody. I am saying that there is also a big shortage of land in the St. Peter area for the relocation of that Police Station. The allocation to the repair station in Speightstown is not fair to the Police Force. Instead of relocating the District "E" Police Station into Speightstown, which will create traffic problems in terms of responses to service, it might be better to look at amalgamating the District "E" Police Station and the Crab Hill Station at Nestfield.

In this House we have been told that a Fire Station is coming for that particular area. I am saying that all of those services could easily be relocated to the complex that used to house the Atlantic Manufacturing Plant. I do not want

Government to ignore this point as they do and for the simple reason, Sir, the location is right. Nestfield is one district away from St. Peter and there cannot be any claim that citing the new station when amalgamating both, will be too far from the previous location. Therefore, I hope that the Attorney-General will recognise that the infrastructure and the parking area, whatever is needed is there at Nestfield and there will be no need to use valuable resources in building that other plant when there is one already in St. Lucy.

Not only that, Sir, I am also suggesting that a special task force be set up within that particular vicinity to deal specifically with the drug problem in the north because it is becoming alarming and I am not happy about it. I have already said in this Parliament that I honestly believe that we cannot continue to look at the drug problem as one about money, we have to look at the drug problem as people with outside interests who are looking to take over the interest of Barbadians. Sir, this is a very serious charge, not one that should be glossed over. The type of capital that is needed to finance the drug trade cannot be found among the ordinary citizens of Barbados. I am saying that when one looks at the behaviour pattern of certain people - we were told at a meeting in the Bahamas, the Speaker was there, the Clerk of the House was there, that what we find as foreign to us is habitual to other people. We must understand that. It might be seen as a negative but others see it as a positive. I am saying that we have to watch that and if we are going to seriously tackle it, we have to understand what is going on.

Also, I want to say to the newspapers of Barbados that whenever they publish a picture with a drug landing and put a street value on it, that has a very negative effect on the young people of Barbados. Sir, if you doubt me, watch any day that there is a front page picture. I am not knocking the Press. I am only giving them information because they might not have the opportunity to observe it. Whenever that picture is seen, one can see a particular reaction from young people that I do not like, even though they cannot take up the newspaper and use what they are seeing, but still it has an effect on them. In other words, one gets the impression that they are having a craving for what they are seeing in the newspaper and therefore one can imagine what will happen to those people when they get the real thing.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has one minute more.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am also saying that because of the behavioural reaction coming from those young people, we must protect those young people from themselves. Also I am a bit worried of putting a value to drugs because another impression is being sent to them that it is better to get involved in this thing than to do normal

work. I am saying that there is nothing wrong, for sometimes it has to be shown, but watch how a street value is being put to it because it is interfering with the minds of the young people. Sir, I am surprised that my 15 minutes seem to be half the time of the Attorney- General.

I thank you, Sir.

6.10 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Chairman, I would like to limit my contribution at this time to the matter of legislation contemplated by the Government as part of its holistic policy of law and order in Barbados. I think it is a very narrow position that attempts to deal with this phenomenon of crime and violence as opposed to seeing in broader terms the issue of law and order. While the Opposition makes a hue and cry about crime and violence, I understand that this Government has been very clearly focussed on law and order.

The traditional approach in Barbados has been to look at national development in terms of the gross domestic product, the human index measurement and the management of balance of payment and not to prominently position the matter of law and order as an issue of great significance within the context of that national development.

Sir, since I have become a member of the Government working with the former Attorney-General and with the incumbent Attorney-General, I have seen a situation where a position has been taken that law and order must constitute one of the prominent issues we should deal with if we attempt to have policies intended to engender national development in this country and to see that national development is sustained and not threatened by criminal elements.

Within that context, this Government has been the author of significant pieces of legislation which have passed through this Chamber and we have been able to find support from the Other Side with reference to much of that legislation. This Government has now made it possible that magistrates can have wider discretion with respect to sentencing. The alternative sentencing programme, which embraces community service order and several other initiatives, is a result of that policy posture.

Indeed, the one which is before us now, the amendment to the Family Law Act has found support on the Other Side of this House.

I am seeking to suggest that our posture on this side with reference to creating a legislative environment in which our national development is sustained is not one

which is reactionary and it is certainly not an ad hoc one. It has been proactive in some very important areas.

On the other side of compassion on this coin is the fact that Government, also through introduction of legislation through this Chamber, has made it possible for firming up at the level of the High Court with respect to sentencing for certain criminal activities in this country. This legislation has to do with crime in its very raw sense, but this Government has also been the author of legislation in a very important sector, the international financial and business sector.

In his Second Reading presentation of the Estimates, the Honourable Minister of Finance alluded to the fact that 40 per cent of our revenue is derived from the international financial services sector. It is, therefore, important that we have in place the kind of legislative framework that facilitates business in that sector. We have been authors of legislation intended to facilitate the success of that sector as well as we have been authors of the legislation intended to prevent undesirable practices within that sector for the protection of that sector.

This is very important in a liberalized environment and context. Barbados can proudly boast of having a very good human resource pool. One of our better resources has always been our people to the extent that our people are educated and skilled in various regards. This is one of the boasts we have been able to honestly and proudly make. To the extent that we are seeking to succeed in an economic environment in which services is very crucial, it is incumbent on us that we ensure that there is adequacy with respect to our human resource pool.

We can also boast of having the institutional capacity developed over the years to ensure that we have the kind of platform in which a deliberate effort is made in that direction to promote the development of international financial services and where international business can be properly positioned.

We have to add to that human resource pool and institutional capacity the kind of legislative framework which would both facilitate that type of business and prevent undesirable practices in that area of our economy.

This Government and the Ministry of the Attorney-General should be applauded because they have been principals in ensuring that the legislation has been made available for the debate and passage through this Parliament. The Government and the Ministry of the Attorney-General are to be complimented for this type of foresight.

The anti-money laundering amendment passed in this House in this context is significant as well. It is

important because of its association with the drug trade which has been alluded to by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy because it helps to fuel the trade. It helps to form the arms which are used upon the pursuit of that illicit trade. It is, therefore, important that we have this kind of legislation and the institution in place to counter the scourge of money laundering. It should never be underestimated by either this Parliament or people the tremendous threat which is posed to us by the presence of billions of dollars of dirty money which sails, floats or flies through the Caribbean in these times.

The potential for undermining governance as we know it, the potential in terms of developing a democratic culture, the potential for corruption of officials at the level of the public sector or, God forbid, even at the level of the political directorate, is a reality we must face. It is a reality which we do not want to subject ourselves and this legislation cannot be underestimated.

6.20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: We want to ensure the continued good health of our financial institutions. A small vulnerable open economy like Barbados will always be a market for investment. We must always seek to improve our chances of attracting that investment in a climate of serious competition from our neighbours and those farther afield.

We have to ensure the health of our institutions whether is in the traditional commercial banking sector or the postal service. We have to ensure that institutions dealing with finances and mandatory instruments are preserved.

The Honourable Attorney-General alluded to amendments to the Constitution to facilitate our participation in setting up the Caribbean Court of Justice. I think that in this regard we have the support of the Other Side. I think we recognise that the development of such an institution is crucial to the furtherance of our development. Sir, through this Government we have been in the forefront in this direction. It is important for the creation and proper functioning of a single economic space.

I think we understand the importance of a single economic space in today's world. Yet, it seems to me that there is some reluctance outside of Barbados towards moving speedily in setting up this important institution.

I believe we should be unapologetic in terms of a position taken by means of abandoning any mechanisms which frustrate the wishes of our sovereign people with respect to the pursuit of the execution of justice. I do not

think that we need to back away, in the face of any criticism, that a Caribbean Court of Justice is a hanging court. We need to be unapologetic in terms of abandoning any colonial institution that prevents us from furthering our objectives as a people, even with respect to the pursuit and the objective of having justice meted out as being fit by our people. Sir, that is certainly my position and I think it is the position which is held on this side.

I want to speak with reference to legislation as it relates to the Government Industrial School. I am of the view that the legislation is outdated. We cannot continue to have our young people at the formative years of their lives being institutionalised for mandatory periods of at least three years and expect that when they leave this institution they would not have developed a dependency on the circumstances of institutional living. When they leave this institution and go back into the society, which have not properly provided for them in terms of support, there is nothing to stabilise them. We have seen over time, the dependency upon institutional living would mandate that it will not be long before they gravitate towards the adult institution at Glendairy Prison. Sir, that type of legislation, in my view, has to be changed.

I salute the efforts to move towards a situation where we can have wire tapping. The big fish in the illegal trade must be caught. We do not have any more room for the small fish at Glendairy Prison and space needs to be created so that the big fish needs to be caught. The playing field must be levelled for the enforcement of law and order as we move to get those people behind the illegal trade.

I support the move for legislation to establish protocol for forensic investigations. This must be the way of the future because we cannot rely very much longer for prosecution's investigations which are based on eyewitness evidence. Sir, eyewitness evidence is not likely to be forthcoming in a climate where people are afraid they would be put to harm as seen in cases in some of our neighbouring countries. Therefore, we need to go this route. The money spent on forensics in these Estimates is money well spent to move to develop legislation that helps to develop the protocols in such an environment.

Mr. Chairman, there has been a balanced approach as we seek to protect the rights of individuals and legislation which permits interviews of a suspected person in the custody of police in a climate where there have been accusations of the violation of an individual's rights. I believe the establishment of a Police Complaints Authority is intended to protect the rights of people.

The submission we heard from the Other Side is symbolic of what seems to be the case that there is a narrow view of law and order. It is seen as crime and

violence. It is seen in a holistic approach as law and order which is the principle plan of national development.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Chairman, I am going to begin in a very unorthodox matter under the Head of the Attorney-General. I want to begin by commending the Honourable Attorney-General on her attainment of Silk. I want to commend her on having reached the status of Queen's Council. I think that it is a tremendous achievement.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Sir, she has literally smashed all the records on her way to wearing silk, now being the youngest person ever to achieve this as well as the person who would have spent the less years at the Bar before receiving this honour.

During her presentation the Honourable Attorney-General reflected on the quality of our judicial system. She included in that brief resume the question of our judges. I want to say a few words on this particular matter.

Recently I was speaking to one of the persons I consider in Barbados to have one of the best legal brains. The question of his ever becoming a judge came up and I was surprised to hear some of the reasons for not wanting to become a judge. They are some persons who believe that the work is monotonous, unlike the stimulating variety of cases which they would have the opportunity to present at the Bar. They think that being a judge tends to take you away from your friends that would be friends at the Bar and friends elsewhere.

6.30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: In light of the fact that the Honourable Attorney-General spoke about the need to expand the number of judges, both at the High Court and the Court of Appeal level, I want to say that we have to continue to make the position of the judge as attractive as possible. I do not mean just simply in terms of salaries. I mean also in terms of the working conditions for the judges so that we can attract high quality candidates.

We cannot afford, Mr. Chairman, to have our best lawyers with excellent judicial potential being disillusioned and disinterested because I still believe that a judgeship should be the pinnacle of a lawyer's career. Being a judge should be an honour. It is almost like a teacher saying that he wants to remain as an assistant teacher and never become a principal. There are some teachers who actually take this attitude, which is sad.

I have to say I am very convinced that the independence of our judiciary is still very much alive in Barbados and that it continues to be free from political or any other pressure, and that our system is transparent. I think judging from what happens in our courts that the decisions given by our judges are quite reasoned and that the quality of the judgments given by them remains quite good and high.

Mr. Chairman, my only criticism of our judges is that they can and should do a bit more. Whether in retirement or whether they are still active, I think they can do more to enlighten our Barbadian youth about the court system. I think they should write a bit more when they retire perhaps. By now, I think we should have books in our schools on the way our law courts work. I personally feel we should have some books in our schools saying this is the way the court system operates, and I do not think we can have any better persons to do that than our judges, whether active or retired.

Mr. Chairman, pupils should learn from very early things like how to dress to go to court. They should learn the difference between a guilty plea and a not-guilty plea. They should know what an appeal is and how it is done, what is cross-examination. All of that we could have in books in our schools.

I believe that too many of our young people have no clue about our court system. The plain truth is that you cannot respect a system, you cannot respect a court about which you know absolutely nothing about. That is the problem I think a lot of our youngsters have. Too many of them even run up against things like contempt of court because of the ignorance of the court system and they do not know that what is happening in the court is what should happen and therefore they think they are being singled out and being pressurised not knowing that this is the way the court operates.

Mr. Chairman, such ignorance gives rise to suspicion that the system is stacked against them and to the notion that the system is not transparent. I believe that if you had these books, it would even create a general interest in the law, but it is sad that so many of them at the end of their tenure just say that is it and never actually give us anything but, perhaps, some day we will see such a publication.

I must also say that what I envisage is the need now for more judicial training for the judges so that they can carry out their role better as judges. I think it is a strength and not a weakness that most of our judges are what we can call all-rounders. There is no specialisation as such saying, "I am the family law man". Most judges are broad and therefore they can deal with a criminal matter, do assizes, do family law, civil work, whatever is put before them. I think that that is a strength and I have to say that today in

this day and age a judge is called upon when doing family law, for instance, to think like a social worker and almost like a child psychologist.

I think that in order to come to grips with a lot of these family law problems we would need to train our judges so that they can have this broad-based look at what is going on in this particular area. To date, I do not remember hearing about a seminar that involves the judges and the social workers or any of the other agencies, but I think that is something which we would have to look at and I believe that even when the Judicial Centre that we are contemplating is constructed, that some provision should be made in that Centre for having some judicial training college as an adjunct to it so that we can do the type of training for our judges.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps things have started to happen because I remember passing by a certain building over the weekend and I saw cars of a certain hue there and I asked a question only to be told that the judges were having a meeting. Perhaps, things are beginning to happen.

Aside.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: I have just been informed by the Attorney-General that there is some money under the IDB project for judicial training so I would hope that these things come to reality.

6.40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Sir, we are living in this very complex world and new and more technical cases are coming up every day. We have cases involving the Internet, and money laundering and so continued training is now an absolute necessity.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would want to say that I am all for a strong court system. I am all for a strong judiciary but most of all, I am for a competent, well-trained judiciary, doing its work with as few obstacles as possible.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I just want to complete my presentation because there really is a lot of information to put before the House, and I expect that it will give members more information for them to debate and ask questions. I am just expanding the presentation.

Mr. Chairman, on the matter of the question of the legislation that is required, in order to enhance the capacity of the police and the detection, there are two major areas which we hope to focus on in the upcoming year. The

Honourable Member for St. Michael West would have referred to what is commonly known as wire tapping legislation but I would prefer to refer to it as electronic interception legislation, because this would allow us, on application of an order from a judge in Chambers, to be able to do certain surveillance that will assist the police in their capacity to be able to investigate the commission of certain crimes and offences.

Let me say that it is not the intention of this Government to be able to have that power exercised whimsically, when the legislation comes, but only on the production of a sufficient evidentiary basis to a judge in Chambers would that legislation contemplate such an order being authorised. The reality is, in addition to the normal offences we face, that more and more because of the security concerns and issues relating to terrorism, that more and more of the international requirements in relation to a programme and package of policies to be put in place for sufficient and effective surveillance, does require some legislative authority for electronic surveillance.

Equally, Mr. Chairman, I would wish to bring before the House the fact that the new forensic centre is anticipated that during the course of this financial year, that building will be completely finished and furnished. The cost of construction and furnishing are approximately \$20 million. It is anticipated that we are going to have to put a framework in place for forensic legislation, and my Ministry will be preparing shortly instructions for the Chief Parliamentary Council to draft that legislation.

I say that one of the things we have to come to grips with is how we can increase the detection rate beyond those cases in which there are "I see" witnesses. The only way you can do that is having the appropriate forensic mechanisms in place, as well as the appropriate training for officers, as well as beefing up the training on all schemes of crime investigation. Sir, not everyone in the Police Force may be a trained forensic person, but they have at least to know how not to tamper with a scene, so as to ensure the integrity of the evidence, which has then to be scientifically tested. I believe that the establishment and opening of that new forensic centre will enure, not only to the benefit of Barbados but, indeed, to the entire Eastern Caribbean.

Mr. Chairman, I want very quickly to touch on the question of the Privy Council's decision which was handed down. I only just received an advanced copy of it today. The Queen vs. Peter Hughes, which is a Privy Council decision, in respect of an appeal from the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal jurisdiction of St. Lucia and the judgment was delivered by Lord Roger of Earlsbury.

Suffice it to say, Sir, that the decision comes as no surprise. We have had, over the last six or seven years, decision after decision, that seeks to put the exercise and

use of the death penalty outside of the realm of the executive of all Caribbean jurisdictions. I do not know what plainer or clearer message we need to receive from the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, as to their feelings on the issue of the death penalty.

Mr. Chairman, the decision was that a mandatory imposition of a death penalty for murder is unconstitutional. The decision is not binding on Barbados but it is binding on most of the OECS territories and on Belize. There was a decision which they passed down called "Reyes and the Queen" also this year. In Belize, they had a savings clause which expired five years after independence. Therefore, they had nothing else to save them.

In St. Lucia, they had the savings clause, but the court distinguished everything, in spite of the existence of the savings clause, and argued that the savings clause related to the death penalty. It saved the death penalty, but when you remove the authority to determine whether a case merited the death penalty or not from the judge, that it was an arbitrary exercise of power which would not have been saved, the savings clause could not help it.

The reality is that Barbados will not be affected but having said that, we are going to have at some point to review more and more, as we have done in terms of looking at rules for the exercise of the prerogative of mercy, that there must be an adherence to the principles of natural justice on almost every stage that a determination is going to be made in respect of an accused. The death penalty here has been used in every instance when a person has been convicted of murder. They are saying that you must have some form of hearing, or representations being made such that the judge has a discretion to determine whether or not the death penalty is merited in that situation.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, this is but one more example of the Privy Council's rejection of the death penalty, as a legal and valid punishment of the English-speaking Caribbean territories. It is the right of the English-speaking Caribbean jurisdictions in my view, to determine what are the appropriate penalties for offences within their jurisdictions. We will continue to have people from outside commenting as long as we leave them with the legitimate status to comment.

As long as the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is the final Court of Appeal for our territories, then they have every right to comment, in spite of the fact that they have no appreciation for how Caribbean people feel, or what they feel strongly about, and this is a perfect case that we should use the advice of the late Prime Minister the Right Excellent Errol Barrow, that we must determine whether we are not, in fact, loitering on colonial premises too long. I do not know now we can have any respect and

pride as individual independent countries and citizens, and not be prepared to provide for our own final Court of Appeal.

I hope that Court of Appeal can be a Caribbean Court of Justice. I feel that if it never comes about, that we must be prepared to de-link from the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Aside.

Hon. Miss MIA A. MOTTLEY: I do not believe we should have two elements of the arms of Government residing outside of the jurisdiction. The Government is made up of the executive, of the legislature and the judiciary.

We, in the Caribbean have allowed for the 35 years in Barbados, after Independence, for two heads of our arms of Government to continue to reside outside of the jurisdiction. Then, we call ourselves proud, independent and sovereign people. If you are not prepared to pay for institutions of Government then, you should not be independent and we have, therefore, to find the resources to provide for the proper resolution, if not, we will sit down here and receive by fax, year after year, judgments that bear no relationship to what Caribbean people feel, or how they feel about how matters should be resolved within the jurisdiction.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I also want to say that the reality also is, that we have sat by, for six or seven years and allowed nothing to happen, largely because of this slew of judgments. Every time you settle into what you think is a working situation, a new judgement comes down, and all of the gold posts change again.

Aside.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Of course, it is a deliberate policy. I believe the time has come for us to take decisive action. The Leader of the Opposition said he hopes that I would not just be talking as an Attorney- General. I can assure him that I will take action on this matter and I trust and look forward to the Opposition's support on any matter that would remove the linking of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council from our system.

Obviously, the necessary consultations have to take place. We not act whimsically in this matter. There will be consultations with the Bench. There will be consultations with the Bar. There will consultations with all appropriate stakeholders, but I am expressing simply the desire and the feeling of what I believe to be the ordinary person out there, most of whom do not have an opportunity to appeal to the Privy Council, because they do not have the resources to be able to access that level of appellate

jurisdiction. Therefore, for them, in effect, the final Court of Appeal is the Barbados Court of Appeal here in Coleridge Street.

6.50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I want to say, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip North pointed out, that we are very lucky to have a strong and independent judiciary in Barbados and long may that last.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has run into overtime and we will like to bring this Debate to a close this evening.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I just want to make one last point tonight and that is that there is serious concerns on the issue of traffic cases in this country. I have spoken to the Royal Barbados Police Force and I believe they are trying their best, but we want a consistency of effort as it relates to traffic cases. In the year 2001 there were 21 699 traffic cases increasing from 16 803 cases the year before which is almost a 25 per cent increase in traffic cases.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Last year, there were 7 540 accidents and in the year 2000 there were 6 898 accidents which is an increase of 642 accidents.

In the year 2001, we saw burglaries go down by 11 per cent. We saw robberies go down by 37 per cent. We saw serious bodily harm offences go down by 22 per cent. We saw offences with firearms go down by 40 per cent, which is good work, but then we see traffic offences increasing by almost 25 per cent.

Barbadians have to be more disciplined on the roads and the police has to exhibit zero-tolerance in respect of traffic offences and I will endorse any action which sees the police - I see they have their hotline but I want to see it result now in that level of assiduousness and consistency of effort so that we do not only do it for three months but that it will be a continuous effort.

Within two months we will be bringing arrangements that would allow a broader range of traffic offences than currently exist to be available for ticketing so that persons do not have to go to court for all of those offences that they go to court for now and waste the time that they do when invariably they want to plea guilty and pay the fine. Therefore, we will be broadening the range of offences for ticketing having received submissions from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

In 1994, this Parliament passed a new Evidence Act and the whole of that Act with the exception of one major section which requires the audio and/or video taping of statements and confessions went into effect. To date, that section remains un-operational but as of April of this year, Mr. Chairman, the Royal Barbados Police Force will be in a position to ensure that all statements and oral confessions for serious offences will be taped or video recorded. We have made provision for this at Central Police Station and at the Oistins Police Station. We are making provisions for it at District "B" and, hopefully at Holetown as opposed to every station for now in this first phase.

This is necessary to boost the credibility of the Police Force because there is a belief that every time somebody makes a statement, it is beaten out of them but the truth is that very often people make voluntary statements but they then come at a later stage and allege that somebody had beaten them and forced a statement out of them or made an inducement to them.

In fairness, I must say that the police have been allowing attorneys-at-law to be present in all murder investigations since 1994 because just before this Administration came into Government, the last four or five murder offences for which people, as my clients, were arrested, I was present at all of the interviews. So this is just an opportunity now to broaden the range of offences for which statements would be recorded. I believe this will enhance the credibility of the Royal Barbados Police Force with the public and remove some of the feeling that it is an "us against them" and that these things are fabricated.

I look forward to being able to preside over the promulgation of that section of the Evidence Act such as would make it mandatory for the Police to operate in that way. There is a lot more...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I look forward to hearing from you tomorrow.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: We will come back tomorrow and deal with these issues because the truth is we have only just started.

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, Mr. CHSITMSN reported progress to His Honour the SPEAKER and asked for leave to sit again and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. SPEAKER, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow.

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

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 13, 2002 was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

7.00 p.m.

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APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY.....	40
Hon. R.N. Greenidge, 40.	

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

HEAD 30 - ATTORNEY GENERAL

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY.....	40
Mr. D.J.H. Thompson, 45, 46; Hon. R. D. Marshall, 50, 51; Mr. D. St. E. Kellman, 51, 52; Hon. Sir Henry Forde, 51; Rev. J.J.S. Atherley, 53, 54; Hon. R.N. Greenidge, 55, 56.	

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR, Rt. Hon. O.S.
 ATHERLEY, Rev. J.J.S.
 CLARKE, Hon. G. A.
 EASTMOND, Hon. R. C.
 FORDE, Hon. Miss C. Y.
 FORDE, Hon. Sir HENRY
 GILL, Mr. D. T.
 GREENIDGE, Hon. R.N.
 KELLMAN, Mr. D. St. E.
 MARSHALL, Hon. R. D.
 MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A.
 PRESCOD, Mr. T. A.
 THOMPSON, Hon. Miss H. E.
 THOMPSON, Mr. D.J.H.
 TOPPIN, Hon. R. St.C.
 WILLIAMS, Mr. M. Z.
 WOOD, Hon. A. P.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Opening, Resumption. The Speaker states that the House was in Committee of Supply when the suspension was taken, the source notes 'Mr. D. CARTER resumed the Chair' and heads the debate 'COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY', but Members address 'Mr. Speaker', Mr. SPEAKER interjects throughout, and Hon. R. St.C. Toppin refers to 'this Second Reading'; the House resolves itself into Committee of Supply only after the question is put. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson's speech, take-slip about 11.50 a.m.. The source reads 'employment has moved from 9.3 per cent, the lowest ever on record, to 9.8 per cent'; the context, and Hon. A. P. Wood's figure of 9.8 per cent, suggest 'unemployment'. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Committee of Supply, Head 30. One speech label reads 'Hon. Miss MIA A. MOTTLEY'; elsewhere the Member is 'Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Committee of Supply, close. The procedural note reads 'Mr. CHSITMSN reported progress', presumably 'Mr. CHAIRMAN'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Close of the record. The record ends with the Sitting suspended until 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 13th March, 2002, with the Committee of Supply still on Head 30; it does not record an adjournment.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Tuesday, 12th March, 2002 to continue the debate on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2002–2003 and the Appropriation Bill, 2002. Mr. SPEAKER announced the resumption and Mr. D. Carter took the Chair; the debate then proceeded with Members addressing the Speaker.

Hon. R. C. Eastmond contrasted the Government's approach to interest rates with the Democratic Labour Party's policies of 1991 to 1993, when the liquidity reserve ratio was raised above its usual 21 to 22 per cent, and

turned to threats to human resources such as HIV/AIDS, drugs and students' attitudes to education. Mr. M. Z. Williams, for St. Michael North West, spoke in support, and a point of order by Mr. D. St.E. Kellman followed. Hon. Miss C. Y. Forde, in her first Estimates debate, thanked the people of St. Thomas and spoke of the Urban Development Commission. Hon. A. P. Wood reviewed the indicators: foreign reserves of \$1.5 billion and unemployment of 9.8 per cent at December 2001, and the National Strategic Plan on which Mr. Courtney Blackman had been engaged. Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson noted that vehicles on the road had grown from 43 000 ten years earlier to 96 000 in 2001, and as Minister of Environment spoke of beach accretion and coastal management.

After the suspension Hon. G. A. Clarke supported the measures, citing expenditure of some \$2.1 billion for the year ending 31st March, 2002, and land prices of \$5 or \$6 a square foot. Mr. T. A. Prescod spoke for the Ivy and Licorish Village, Mr. D. T. Gill described the Estimates as the compass and chart of Government and welcomed the \$20 million Agricultural Trust, and Hon. R. St.C. Toppin listed provisions including \$6.5 million to refurbish the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, \$16.3 million for HIV/AIDS prevention and a \$25 million industrial investment and employment fund.

The Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, closed the debate. He called for parliamentary reform of the budgetary process, described the Budget as pro-growth, and announced a year of direct tax and pension reform. He urged the private sector to finance the re-engineering of production and housing, defended the GEMS hotel project and its board, and explained that \$300 million had been borrowed after September 11 and not yet spent; foreign reserves had risen from \$11 million in 1992 to \$1.460 billion. The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the nomination of Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, the Chairman of Committees being absent, Mr. D. T. Gill took the Chair of the Committee of Supply, which began Head 30, Attorney General (\$56 040 833). Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley said that almost half her time had gone to terrorism and money-laundering matters, and spoke of computerising the courts, a Rules Committee under the Chief Justice, a permanent Coroner's Court, a review of the Legal Profession Act and continuous Assizes. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. D. J. H. Thompson, asked about the \$145 000 provided for the Caribbean Court of Justice, the Money Laundering Authority, the National Task Force on Crime Prevention and the Police Complaints Authority.

Hon. R. D. Marshall spoke on the police and traffic; Mr. D. St. E. Kellman's remarks on vehicle maintenance drew a point of order from Hon. Sir Henry Forde; Rev. J. J. S. Atherley spoke on law and order legislation; and Hon. R. N. Greenidge congratulated the Attorney-General on taking silk and urged better conditions for judges. Hon. Miss M.

A. Mottley, completing her presentation, reported 7 540 traffic accidents in 2001 against 6 898 in 2000, while burglaries fell by 11 per cent and robberies by 37 per cent. Progress was reported and the Sitting was suspended until 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 13th March, 2002.