
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, May 31, 2002

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Friday, May 31, 2002.

PRESENT

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

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

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE, K.A., Q.C., M.A., LL.M. (Cantab.)

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Civil Service)

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, LL.B.

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

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL (Minister of Public Works and Transport)

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

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

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

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prayers were led by Rev. Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, May 28, 2002.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, May 28, 2002, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am commanded to lay:

The Value Added Tax (Refund) (Towner Realty Inc.) Order, 2000;

The Annual Report of the Central Bank of Barbados for the year 2001.

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

The Annual Report of the Operations of the Barbados Drug Service for the Fiscal Year April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

ORDER NO. 9 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION (REVIEW OF BOUND- ARIES) ORDER, 2002

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to begin the first part of a two-phased process to give effect to the recommendations made in the Third Report of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it says the first part of a two-phased process because it is intended that the second phase will involve the introduction into Parliament of specific legislation to amend the Third Schedule of the Constitution which deals with rules governing the size of constituencies in Barbados. The precise matter before Parliament is set out in a Resolution which I feel a need to read. It speaks in these terms:

“WHEREAS pursuant to section 41D(1) of the Constitution, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission shall review the number and boundaries of constituencies into which Barbados is divided and submit to the Minister for presentation to each House a Report in accordance with that section;

WHEREAS on the 28th day of March, 2002 the Electoral and Boundaries Commission submitted a Report to the Minister showing the constituencies into which it recommends that Barbados should be divided in order to give effect to the rules set out in the Third Schedule of the Constitution;

WHEREAS it is provided by section 41D(3) of the Constitution that not later than two months after the Commission has submitted the Report, the Minister shall lay before each House for its approval, the draft of an order by the Governor-General for giving effect to recommendations contained in the report;

AND WHEREAS the report recommends that Barbados should be divided into the 30 constituencies specified in the First Schedule to the draft Electoral and Boundaries Commission (Review of Boundaries) Order, 2002 having the boundaries as described in the Second Schedule thereto;

BE IT RESOLVED that Parliament approve the draft Electoral and Boundaries Commission (Review of Boundaries) Order, 2002.”

That, Sir, is the specific matter that is before us today, a draft Order specifically containing the recommendations set out in the Report of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission prescribing that Barbados should be divided into 30 constituencies as specified in the First Schedule to this Order, 30 constituencies having their boundaries as described in the Second Schedule to the Order and that the Order shall come into force on the dissolution of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, this Order has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of Barbados and it is important that at the very outset of this debate it is established that Barbados is one of those societies where the provisions for the conduct of elections and the provisions for the determination of the size of boundaries of constituencies are set out in the Constitution of Barbados rather than by some other statutory provision.

There is a history to this, Mr. Speaker. At the Independence Conference in 1966, the political parties represented at that Commission were divided on the issue. The Opposition Parties of the day felt that the conduct of elections was a matter that should have been deliberately enshrined in the Constitution, that there should be an Electoral and Boundaries Commission and that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission should itself be enshrined in the Constitution.

The governing party of the day, the Democratic Labour Party, felt that the then arrangements for the conduct of elections were satisfactory and the process of

having electoral boundaries and matters of that kind dealt with by a Select Committee of Parliament would satisfy the purpose.

Mr. Speaker, we are now a society in which, as a result of the amendment to the Constitution in 1985, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission has a constitutional responsibility for conducting periodic reviews of constituency boundaries under the Third Schedule of the Constitution as well and have also a responsibility for varying those boundaries, taking into account natural boundaries and other such pertinent considerations. Also, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission has a constitutional responsibility for the conduct of elections in Barbados and a responsibility for ensuring that they are conducted in a free and fair way.

Mr. Speaker, there is a history of the work of this Commission. There have been three previous Reports submitted to Parliament by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission. The first was submitted in 1989. It was a unanimous Report at a time when the Commission comprised a Mr. Jordan as Chairman, Messrs. Hewitt and Serrao appointed by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Barbados Labour Party, Dr. Keith Hunte and Mr. Asquith Phillips appointed by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Democratic Labour Party. They submitted a unanimous Report in 1989 recommending that the number of constituency boundaries should have been increased from 27 to 28 and boundaries realigned in a manner prescribed by way of recommendations in that Report itself.

The Constitution of Barbados also prescribes that where the motion for the approval for any draft order under this section is rejected by either House then the Minister responsible for electoral affairs shall amend the draft and lay the amended draft before each House not later than two months after the date of its rejection or withdrawal.

In 1989, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission submitted a unanimous Report. Sir, that Report was rejected by the House of Assembly and the Minister responsible for electoral affairs, who was the Prime Minister, exercised the responsibility of determining the number of seats, as well as the boundaries to be applied to each constituency in the preceding election.

11.30 a.m.

Sir, it is important to understand as well that the exercise of submitting a Report to this Parliament, having the draft order either approved or not approved, in that instance not approved, having the Minister redraft the order, all led to a situation where the boundaries for the 1991 election were settled by the then Prime Minister only ten months before the election was called.

Mr. Speaker, a second Report was submitted in 1994, because the Constitution also requires that Reports under subsection I of 41(D) that will be submitted by the Commission in the case of its first Report, not less than one, or more than five years after the date of appointment of the members of the Commission. So, the Commission was established in 1955 and it had a responsibility to submit a Report within five years, and it did so in 1989. Thereafter, in the case of any subsequent Report, not less than two or more than five years from the date of the submission of the last Report.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, the second Report was submitted by the Commission in November of 1994. A third Report was submitted in November of 1998. The House will recall, Sir, that in 1994, and I believe that one of the recommendations of the Report was that there was a need for an enumeration to be carried out in order to put subsequent elections on an incontrovertible basis. The 1994 Report did not recommend boundary changes. In fact, it was submitted after the September election, but its principal recommendation was that there should be a comprehensive enumeration carried out. In fact, Mr. Speaker, that enumeration was carried out subsequent to the 1994 Report being laid in Parliament and approved by this Parliament was an exhaustive exercise. It took a number of years, but the important point is that by the year 1998, we were in possession of a revised list of electors that had enabled the electoral list of Barbados to be clean.

Sir, a third Report was submitted to this Parliament, in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution in November of 1998, based upon the result of a comprehensive, new enumeration of electors and a clean list but, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that Report was submitted too close to the date, when the Minister responsible for electoral affairs had it in mind for the calling of elections.

As you would understand, Sir, this country has a tremendous history and proud record for fair and free elections, such that we are one of the few countries in the world where observers are not required. Therefore, there was no thought of our acting on the Report of November 1998 as the basis upon which elections in 1999 were called.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that there has to be a fair and decent interval between the submission of Reports to this Parliament, the carrying out of the Constitutional provisions, in relation to either the acceptance or the rejecting of that Report and its amendment and the subsequent calling of elections.

We did not act on the 1998 Report that was submitted to us in November of that year, precisely because it was too close to elections for us to give the country the feeling of confidence and comfort that we were involved in a fair and free electoral process.

Subsequent to that, Mr. Speaker, we took advice from the Solicitor General about the 1998 Report. It was advice that we accepted, that the 1998 died with the Parliament and there was in consequence a need for us to go through the process of submitting a new Report with new recommendations.

Sir, the last Report was submitted in November 1999. The Constitution provides that such Reports, other than the first, should be submitted to the Minister not less than two years, or not more than five years after the date of the submission of the last Report. It means, in simple terms, that this fourth Report should have been submitted to this House by the latest, November in the year 2003 and at the earliest, Mr. Speaker, not earlier than November in the year 2000. The Constitution provides that this Report should have been here not more than five years after the last one had been submitted.

The point I am making, Sir, and I am at pains to make, concerns the validity and the standing of this Report within the context of the Constitution, but more specially, Sir, within the context of our determination to have fair and free elections conducted in this country, this Report is before Parliament, 20 months before the Constitution says that it should be here as a final deadline. We have until November 2003 to bring the Report but every effort has been made to ensure that the Commission conducted its work with such expedition, that the country can have before it, a Report in which we can repose confidence, but on which we can act upon at an early date, to allow everyone having a vested interest in elections, to feel the work has been done as comprehensively as possible.

May I say, Mr. Speaker, that between 1998 and this date, the Commission has not been idle. In order to put us to this position, Sir, where we could have a comprehensive Report before Parliament, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission developed a work programme in which its first exercise was to commission field trips to identify where constituency boundaries were drawn. There was a comprehensive evaluation of polling districts to determine where there were heavy concentrations of electors. Indeed, Sir, interim progress reports were received by the Commission of at least six meetings, during which all of the available options were discussed among members of the Commission and the Chief Electoral Officer.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, before this Report was prepared, and after all of the field work had been done and the visits to constituencies to look at where boundaries began and ended, a final Report from the Chief Electoral Officer was received after ten months of research and field work. Sir, that final Report which was the result of ten months of exhaustive field work by the Chief Electoral Officer, constitute the basis of the recommendations that were put to

the Commission and the basis of the recommendations that the Commission unanimously adopted.

Sir, I am going to this extent, because one of the chief issues that is before us as a country and a Parliament, concerns the issue that was even there at Independence, which is the role of an Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission in a democracy such as Barbados, in ensuring fair and fair elections, relative to the exercise by Ministers acting in their sole discretion.

11.40 a.m.

The Barbados Labour Party, from as far back as 1966, called for an independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. In 1991 we supported in this Parliament a unanimous Report of that Commission made up as it was then of members recommended by the two leading political parties. Mr. Speaker, consistent with that stand, we have always felt that in the matter of determining constituency boundaries and the size and the extent of their geographical space, that it would be best left to independent, objective, scientific work of officials of an Electoral and Boundaries Commission to advise as to what is fair, reasonable and objective rather than having the matter left entirely to the discretion of a Minister acting on his sole discretion to decide the number of constituencies in this country and the shape of those boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, this House has before it a Report that has been prepared as a result of ten weeks of field work by the officers of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission to fine-tune the data before the Commission. Six meetings were held to take interim Reports from the officials and a final Report from the Chief Electoral Commissioner. On the basis of that, persons drawn from across the political landscape representing the two major parties unanimously recommended adoption of the recommendations contained in that Report.

We, therefore, feel that this Report before us is a fair Report. It has been developed on the basis of a process of going to the Constitution, by reliance of the expression of confidence of the Commission to a process that was deliberately designed to root it in objectivity, facts, reasonableness and respect for our tradition of fair and free elections rather than the alternative which is a process where the Minister alone will decide the electoral boundaries of this country.

I say all that in advance because the Constitution of Barbados prescribes that if the House for whatever reason should reject this Report, then it is left to the discretion of the Minister in his or her sole discretion to say what the boundaries should be and to make determinations as to what should be the number of constituencies.

Sir, as Minister responsible for elections, it is a responsibility I would not want to exercise having regard

to the alternative of a Report that is before us which followed the process in its preparation that can give us the confidence of something which we can all be proud of.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want at the start of this debate to congratulate and thank the Chief Electoral Officer and the members of staff of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission who have worked very hard over the course of the last few years to undertake this challenging exercise of preparing a report that can come to Parliament as a unanimous report. I also have to thank the Commissioners appointed by the two political parties for the maturity of their judgement in being able to reach unanimity on a matter that is as controversial and as difficult as the drawing of boundaries and the determination of new constituencies in this country.

Sir, we sometimes take our democracy lightly and for granted. The matters of the drawing of constituency boundaries and the determination of the number of constituencies for election are matters that are so divisive in other jurisdictions and are precisely why other countries have to call in election observers to make sure that their elections are free and fair. We have before us a Commission drawn from both sides of the political fence which has given us the benefit of a unanimous Report in relation to the number of boundaries and the shape of those boundaries. The alternative, if we reject that Report, would be left entirely to the discretion of a politician, namely myself, to redraw those boundaries with his very fine political pen.

I want everyone to understand that, because those who are urging that this Report should be rejected have to understand that the consequence of its rejection is that we would supplant a process of independent development of the Report by one that is subject only to political determination by a partisan politician, who, as a sitting Member, may have an interest in the issue. I want to set it as broadly as that because this is what essentially we are about.

Sir, this Report has made three broad recommendations. Firstly, it is recommending that the number of constituencies in Barbados should be increased from 28 to 30. Secondly, it is recommending that the Third Schedule to the Constitution which prescribes rules governing the optimum size of constituencies should be amended. Let me explain, Sir. The Third Schedule to the Constitution says:

1. The electorate shall, so far as practicable, be equal in all constituencies: provided that the electorate in any constituency shall, so far as practicable, not exceed 110 per cent nor be less than 90 per cent of the total electorate divided by the number of constituencies therein.

It then goes on to say that:

2. Natural boundaries such as highways and rivers shall be used wherever possible – to the immediate constituencies boundaries.

So the rules to the Constitution prescribes, as it presently stands, that no constituency should be greater than 10 per cent or less than 10 per cent of the average size constituency where the average size constituency is the total electorate divided by the number of constituencies. So no constituency should be greater than 10 per cent and none should be less than 10 per cent of the average size. This Report is recommending that we should allow for a 15 per cent variance from the average size of a constituency for reasons we will not go into.

Consequential to that, Mr. Speaker, the Report is recommending adjustments to the existing 28 constituencies' boundaries in a manner that is set out in section 2 of the Schedule to the Bill which Honourable Members as they speak will have more than ample opportunity to address in greater detail.

Mr. Speaker, I need to establish in an incontrovertible way the need for the change in the number of constituencies and the boundaries. The issue I shall first speak to is, why is there a need to change the number of constituencies and the boundaries of constituencies? Sir, the Third Schedule of our Constitution prescribes that no constituency shall be larger than 10 per cent or smaller than the average constituency where the average constituency is derived from taking the total number of electorates and dividing them by the number of constituencies.

11.50 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, based upon the Electoral Roll of January 31, 2002, there were 214,870 electors. This is the official List published in January and which provided statistical basis on which the Commission has deliberated. Based on that, Mr. Speaker, the average size of constituencies in Barbados is 7,624 electors. There is a maximum constituency of electors being made up of 4,841. The maximum is 8,441 and the minimum is 6,906. The average constituency in Barbados, based on the size of electors out of the 28 constituencies, average 7,624. Constituencies could be as large as 7,641 and be within the Constitution and be as small as 6,906 and be still within the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, there is a situation where half of the constituencies of Barbados are not within the range of size of constituencies prescribed by the Constitution. Out of the 14, six are too large in relation to the provisions as set out in section 3 of the Constitution, while eight are too small.

Sir, the Constitution speaks in reasonable terms that as far as practicable it should conform with the average. Sir, if it could be contradicted that either one or two of them were too small, then that would have been all that we are

dealing with but we simply cannot have a situation in a society where 14 of the constituencies that exist in the country are incompatible in terms of the size of electors with the provisions of the Constitution. Therefore, it is quite clear, Mr. Speaker, it is in the circumstances where 50 per cent of the constituencies are of a size that are in conflict with the Constitution, then far-reaching changes have to be made in relation to the boundaries and the size of those constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, there is an additional point that needs to be taken into consideration. I have said to this House that there are 14 constituencies that are outside the range of the Constitution. They are either too small or too large. Out of that 14, six are too large. Out of the six that are too large, four are located side by side. All are located in the south-eastern corner of Barbados – St. Philip North, St. Philip South, Christ Church East and Christ Church East Central. Not only are they large, Sir, but are in that part of the country where the population is growing at the fastest rate.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the other two that are not large, they are in the centre of the country – St. James South and St. Thomas. They are surrounded by constituencies that are already at the limit and are located in areas, like within the Parish of St. George, where the population is growing. Therefore, if the constituencies that are too large were spread across the country, it would be a simple matter of adjusting boundaries here and there to move voters from areas where the constituencies were too large into areas that were too small. There is the situation where most of the largest constituencies in Barbados are located side by side and if we were to move voters from one constituency to the other, it would make an already too large constituency more in breach of the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, it therefore follows that based upon the Constitution and our population characteristics, a compelling logic required that at least one new constituency had to be in the St. Philip/Christ Church area.

Sir, I may even go so far as to say that if we try to maintain the existing 28 constituencies and try to distribute the excess electorate from St. Philip, it would then mean that adjustments across the country would have to be made to the point where all of the boundaries and constituencies we have become accustomed to would have to be changed to the point where our entire electorate map of the country would have had to be comprehensively revised.

Therefore, two matters weighed heavily on the minds of the Commission, not only the 14 constituencies that had to be conformed with the law but that the location of the constituencies were such that it made it almost impossible and impracticable to adjust boundaries here and there to be able to correct the imbalances.

Sir, the logic of creating a boundary in St. Philip, I do not think would be disputed. I hope not, because those four constituencies are large enough such that one can draw from them, one that is big enough as a constituency in its own right, where the area in itself is a population catchment where one knows that the constituency is going to grow in the future, therefore, commonsense will tell you that it has to be done.

Sir, in the north, St. James South butts and abounds St. James North which is already up to the limit. This butts and abounds St. James South which is already up to the limit. This butts and abounds St. Peter which is already to the limit. It also butts and abounds St. Lucy which is already to the limit and St. Thomas which is over the limit. It is also an area that, in itself, is one of the areas of fastest growing population. We are seeing lots of development in such areas as Husbands. Therefore, it is also of sound logic for us to create a second constituency.

Mr. Speaker, in 1991 when this matter came before the House, I said we should not be forced into a situation where, on every election, we have to cut boundaries and change constituencies but that these changes should be able to last approximately ten to fifteen years. Therefore, these adjustments have to be made with an eye for growth. If new constituencies have to be created, then logic, commonsense and fair play should tell a person where the growth in the population is taking place. Mr. Speaker, these are the simple, commonsense, hard facts that the members of the Commission acted upon when they also located the two constituencies in St. James Central.

Sir, the policy of this matter is also an issue. The BLP has nominated persons to serve on the Commission. You have my assurance that I am on speaking terms with members of both sides of the Commission but I do not give to them directions.

Sir, can you imagine the situation if we had decided to keep 28 or 29 constituencies and locate one of them in St. Philip? Then there is the possibility that one of the St. Michael constituencies will have to go. Can you imagine the human cry about gerrymandering in this country if a BLP Administration had brought to this Parliament a recommendation to say that we were abolishing a constituency that a DLP Administration has held in every election, in every year, since the single member boundary had been in existence? Can you imagine, as we might have to do, a recommendation that says to abolish a constituency that had been held by no less a person than the Right Honourable Erskine Sandiford? The charges of gerrymandering would have lifted the roof! Can you imagine if we had gone and decided that St. Michael North West was too small and decided we were going to abolish it? That St. Michael North seat has been held by the DLP in

every election since Independence other than the last election. Can you imagine if we were to abolish St. Michael South Central, a constituency the BLP has not held other than on one occasion since Independence in this country?

Mr. Speaker, in a way I do not believe that members of the Commission were governed by any specific partisan purpose. If there was a partisan purpose, then it could only be that since St. Michael has historically been a stronghold for the DLP, then to retain St. Michael as it is, we would be reinforcing the tradition of the DLP in electoral politics.

Mr. Speaker, to leave St. Michael constituency as it is, is not doing a favour to the BLP because there are at least five seats in the St. Michael area that the BLP has won only once in the last 40 years.

12.00 noon

The retention of the St. Michael constituency in the existing number reflects a superior wisdom on the part of the Commission that as far as practical we should not set out radically to disrupt the electoral map of a country to the point where it becomes unrecognisable as the basis for allowing elections to take place in an incontrovertible manner.

Sir, what is being proposed here needs not necessarily be in favour of the Barbados Labour Party. We will have to contest the next election in circumstances where we will face the St. Michael constituencies, recognising that it is an area that we have not done well in since the days of Cox, but we are prepared in the interest of fairness and the minimum disruption of electoral boundaries in this country to allow the contours of St. Michael to remain as is.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that pragmatism has guided the members of the Commission. All those who have represented the St. Michael constituencies know what is involved to represent constituencies where a high degree of intimacy exists between members of a tightly knit constituency and their representative. It is no easier, I am told, to represent the relatively small St. Michael constituency than those constituencies like St. Peter. In fact, the demands on the representatives may even be harder.

There is a political wisdom that allows us to be able to contemplate a free and fair election where the Barbados Labour Party cannot be accused of seeking to disadvantage the Opposition by reducing the number of seats in areas that the Opposition has traditionally regarded as its stronghold. The Democratic Labour Party wants to repudiate this Report but this Report is trying to keep the Democratic Labour Party's strongholds intact to the extent that they now exist.

Sir, this is a remarkable Report. This Report is so respectful of the Opposition that no matter who is the Leader

of the Opposition his seat has not been touched. If it is the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, his boundaries have not been adjusted. If it is the Honourable Member for St. John, his boundaries have not been adjusted. If it is the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, his boundaries have not been adjusted. There was a time when the Leader of the Opposition was from St. Michael South and those boundaries have not been adjusted.

Sir, we are presenting to this House a Report in which the only two members of this House who will go back to the people with the same constituency boundaries as they contested the last time are the two members of the Opposition. Sir, this is a remarkable thing.

Mr. Speaker, we have to reflect on the substance of this, because the history of gerrymandering worldwide is a history in which sitting Governments use control of the electoral process radically to change the boundaries within which their opponents must function such that the members of the Opposition find themselves confronted with such drastic changes in their boundaries as seriously to undermine their changes at the polls.

Sir, I can speak personally as to how this would affect a sitting Member of Parliament when he is in Opposition and finds his boundaries adjusted by the hands of a politician. I came to this Parliament as a result of two elections in which my majorities were such as to cause my seat to be regarded as marginal. I won my first election by minus one, then it went to 228 and then it went to 326.

Sir, in 1986 I won an election by 300 votes and in that majority of 300 there were two boxes comprising Diamond Corner and Moore Hill on one side and Black Bess and Bakers on the other side. Sir, my majority in those boxes were more than 300 votes but the boundary changes made in 1991 cut the Diamond Corner box in half in which I had received 83 per cent of votes, and moved it to St. Andrew. They then cut Bakers off from St. Peter and put it in St. James North. I won Indian Ground in 1986 but they cut Indian Ground in half and put part of it in St. Andrew. I won Boscobelle and then they went there, cut off a piece and put it in St. Lucy. They then cut the boundaries in a district called Oxford.

Sir, Oxford is a district between St. Peter and St. Lucy and it was very dear to me because it is an obscured little village but it was the last district in Barbados that did not have electricity in 1984 when I became a Member of Parliament, the people in Oxford did not know what it was like to have a refrigerator or to turn on an electric light. The Barbados Light & Power was carrying out a rural electrification programme but said that Oxford was too small for them to put electricity in that village.
12.10 p.m.

As a Member of Parliament I fought until I got the Barbados Light & Power to agree that the people of Oxford needed to have electricity so that they could be able to turn on lights and to operate television sets.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke of Judge Gap. When I became the Member of Parliament, those were my faithful supporters who voted for me in St. Peter, contributing to 326 majority that I enjoyed, by the skin of the teeth, by which I came to this Parliament.

Sir, I know what can happen when adjustments are made to the boundaries of Opposition Members that based on it, could be on the minds of reasonable men, seen to be governed by one consideration that using past electoral results, everything should be done to undermine the standing of Opposition Members in the coming election.

We have a Report before this House in which no adjustments have been made to the constituencies of the serving temporary Members of the Opposition and to the Leadership of the Party, either real or imagined. It is to the credit of our country that such a Report should be before this House.

Mr. Speaker, the question arises, why we do not allow it to remain at 28? The answer is that to allow it to remain at 28, with 14 constituencies not within the range but with those above the average clustered together, would have caused such a comprehensive re-configuration of the electoral map of this country as not to be able to recognise the map after it has been redrawn. It would have led to electoral confusion and would have been at conflict with the precepts of free and fair elections.

Sir, we could have settled for 29 but it would have also meant that the need for representation in central Barbados, St. Thomas, St. Peter and St. James, would not have been met, in an area that is growing and it could have only been possibly accommodated by the abolition of parts of St. Michael.

Sir, as it now stands, the unanimous recommendation of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is to adjust that part of the Schedule of the Constitution that prescribes the range for the relative size of constituencies such that they should be not 90 or 100 per cent of the average but 115 per cent of the average at the greatest or 85 per cent at the smallest, because you have to allow for a little bit of growth. That sensible recommendation will mean that this Report can be adopted on the understanding that almost all of the 30 new constituencies are near 7 000 electors, near the maximum, and that those 30 constituencies can be kept relatively intact without the fear of having consistently to come to this House to make draconian changes in the nature of boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, a number of issues have arisen about this matter of 30 constituencies. People have sought to compare the size of our Parliament with other Parliaments in the Caribbean. For example, why should Barbados want to have 30 constituencies for 280 000 people, when Jamaica with a population of two million people has only 60 constituencies?

Sir, people forget that Jamaica also has a local government system and that you cannot compare the governance of one country to the other, because a Member of Parliament in Barbados is required to perform the role of a Member of Parliament in Jamaica's House of Representatives and that of the local government Counsellor in Jamaica.

In Trinidad there are 36 constituencies but there is a local government system. We do not have large governance in relative terms because the Members in our Parliament do the work of Member of the House of Representatives as the local Government representatives do in the other Caribbean countries.

Mr. Speaker, they should also know that a country like Bermuda that has only 60 000 people, has 40 representatives in its House of Parliament and that the Bahamas with a population the same size of Barbados, has 40 Members of Parliament and a local government system. I do not understand, given our peculiar circumstance and being a society where Members of Parliament are being called upon to perform the same role as local government persons in other jurisdictions, how we can say that thirty constituencies are too large by comparison to other jurisdictions.

Sir, the issue as to whether or not the number should be even or uneven has also crept into public discussion. It is to be respected that because of the situation in Trinidad and Tobago where there has been a hung Parliament, there could be some unease about having an even number. The fact is that the number of constituencies has to be based upon a reason and cannot be based upon expedience at one point in time.

As recent as 1994, there were three entities represented in this House. If you had one person from a third Party having an uneven number of Seats in this House, it could have opened up the possibility of a hung Parliament as you have in Trinidad, 14, 14 and 1. Sir, it is not out of the bounds of possibility that you can have a viable Independent candidate running in the next election who...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, it is not outside of the bounds of probability that you can have a viable Independent candidate running in the next election.

The Caribbean electoral experience has known a situation where in a neighbouring country you had an uneven number of constituencies. A man ran as an Independent candidate, won his seat and ended up being the Prime Minister.

Asides

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the logic that you would prevent a hung Parliament by having an uneven number does not stand the test of time nor logic.

I would want to say that if we were to have a situation, hardly likely, where you have an even number of seats then I hope that two things would apply: that if the will of the people would not be discerned we should go back to the people, because elections are called only to discern the will of the people, and that our Constitution would help us.

I am going to use the case of the Opposition. The Opposition Leader has not resigned nor his appointment has not been revoked. No matter what anybody says, the Governor-General is not in a position to appoint a new Leader of the Opposition because there is nobody who commands the support of a majority of Members who do not support the Government. The Leader of the Opposition stays as the Leader of the Opposition precisely because of the protection in our Constitution that somebody else has to be able to command the support of those who support the Government for the Governor-General to act.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: A Prime Minister in Barbados remains the Prime Minister until he either resigns or his appointment is revoked and the Governor-General is satisfied that there is somebody who can command the support of the majority because that new Prime Minister would not be in a position to command the support of the majority and it would be hoped that the existing Prime Minister would go back to the polls.
12.20 p.m.

That is why the Constitution requires it, but these things have to be based upon reason. The logic is that there are countries that have even numbered constituencies, have had them for their entire electoral history and there are countries that have had uneven numbers like St. Vincent where the independent member became Prime Minister and there are some in multi-party democracies where no matter, whether the number is even or uneven, you have to depend upon coalitions to solve the electoral problems. I only hope, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that in the very dim and unlikely situation in which we were to have a hung Parliament that the people would agree that we all go back to the polls and discern the real will of the people because elections are only for that purpose.

The question as to whether or not there has been consultation has been brought into the realm of public discourse to the extent that this is a Report that reflects a unanimous position by members of the Commission, the Report has come to this House as a Report bearing the unanimous support of the members of the Commission, but we are being told that although the Democratic Labour Party nominated persons to serve on the Commission, there was no consultation between the Democratic Labour Party and the members of that Commission and, therefore, they can take a stand in this House independent of that.

Sir, on the face of it, I would have to agree that since in this House there is no evidence that the members of the Democratic Labour Party speak to each other and in the other House there is clear evidence that the members of the Democratic Labour Party are not speaking to each other either. If they cannot speak to each other in Parliament, it seems to me unlikely that they can speak to anybody outside of Parliament. So on the face of it, given the inability of the Democratic Labour Party to speak to each other, I would have to begin to suspect that there is a modicum of truth in the assertion of one part of the Democratic Labour Party that they were consulted with their own.

Sir, when I appointed the persons to the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, I was conscious of the fact that they were there to constitute as members of the Commission but that they were persons appointed on the advice of the Barbados Labour Party. I find it strange, Sir, that the same Leader of the Opposition who has consulted with me pertaining to matters that were before the Electoral and Boundaries Commission could say to the public that he consults with me but he has not consulted with the people whom he has appointed to the Commission.

Sir, it might be what could otherwise be called if I were not in Parliament, an unbelievable lie, but I am not at liberty in Parliament to refer to it as such. I confirm, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the Leader of the Opposition and I have had consultation on this matter and it began because we had to consult in the context of the status of the 1994 Report that was submitted in November but was not acted upon. He and I consulted and both agreed that a legal opinion would be sought and we would abide by that legal opinion.

I am also going to say, Sir, that he did say that it was his view that elections should be held at least two years after the Report had been submitted. I find it strange, Sir, that there was no consultation whatsoever between the Leader of the Opposition and the members of the Commission but the members of the Commission appointed by the Democratic Labour Party came forward with a recommendation in the exact words used by the Leader of the Opposition that elections should be held two years after the Report was submitted. I find it a strange but unconstitutional coincidence.

The Constitution of Barbados already prescribes in very clear terms that it is within the discretion of the Prime Minister to follow a process to call elections at any time and there is no provision in the Constitution that confers on the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, either in whole or in part, a power or prerogative to say when elections should be held. Indeed, Sir, I would put it this way: the Electoral and Boundaries Commission has no more power to say when elections should be held than it has any power to prescribe how many women should constitute the candidates to contest elections at the polls. What has come forward, Sir, is a recommendation that is contrary to the provisions of the Constitution of this country as regards how elections should be called, because the Prime Minister can by asking that this House be dissolved cause the Governor-General to issue a writ and that is embodied in the Constitution. A recommendation contrary to the provisions of our Constitution have come forward from the two members of the Commission appointed by the Democratic Labour Party and I say, Sir, that recommendation bears an exact coincidence with the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition.

If the public does not believe that there is consultation, I feel that it was, and I know that all thinking people feel that it was. Sir, why would there be this fascination with intruding in an otherwise impeccable Report? This recommendation is in collision with the Constitution and by that reason and that reason alone Parliament cannot agree with it. This Parliament is powerless to accept a proposal that is at variance with the supreme law of the land.

So I ask the question, why would there be a provision for the recommendations in the Electoral and Boundaries Commission Report that is in conflict with the Constitution? I say, Sir, that there is the provision that the elections should only be called two years after this has been submitted and it is only there because the Democratic Labour Party wants a stay of execution.

It is only there, continuously issued from the mouth of the Leader of the Opposition and echoed in the representations, unconstitutionally so, by his appointees to the Electoral and Boundaries Commission because the Democratic Labour Party is in such a state of abject anarchy, it is not now recognisable as a serious political party. It is a rabble. It is in a state where it is at the vagaries of a series of processes that are not democratic. You have now at least four different persons leading four different factions and you have one person who has disassociated himself from leadership or is just quietly manipulating the levers of the party behind the scenes to the extent of causing maximum confusion, particularly in relation to the selection of candidates.

Sir, there was a statement that I cannot claim authorship for, but it says that "power without responsibility is the prerogative of a harlot". It is not my quotation, Sir, but

there is an aspect of that in the Democratic Labour Party, people walk away from power but want responsibility and this body cannot run because this body says he cannot run and the whole thing is a mess. We are now to subject ourselves to the subversion of a serious Report by the insertion in that serious Report of a provision that is contrary to the Constitution merely to create an artificial controversy in this country when, in fact, all that is being asked for by the Democratic Labour Party is not to call the elections too soon, they are not ready. That is all it is about, Sir.

We do not have on this Side any new assurances about the fact that we will not call elections after the submission of a Report or the adoption of that Report at a too soon date. We have gone through that already. In 1998, a Report was submitted to me as Minister very close to the election and I did not accept that we could contest an election on a Report that was submitted so close to the date of election. Sir, who was the Democratic Labour Party to talk about immorality in calling elections less than two years after a Report had been submitted?

In 1991, a unanimous Report was submitted to this House by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission made up of members of the Democratic Labour Party in the distinguished personage of Dr. Keith Hunte, the Principal of the University of the West Indies.

12.30 p.m.

Sir, that was the calibre of representation that went into the Report. It was rejected by the Democratic Labour Party in the House, with changes on the grounds that we did not agree to 28 members. But, the Prime Minister of the day made the changes and all of us, including the Honourable Member for St. John, fought the 1991 election on the basis of boundary changes that were decided by the Prime Minister of the day, ten months before the elections were called.

In 1971, when the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow drew the boundaries, running from double member to single member, the elections were called six weeks after the boundary adjustments were made.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I speak on the protecting of the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition then, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, and others, in 1971 knew only six weeks before the election, what the boundaries were that they were going to be running in. Here we have a Report that could have been laid in this Parliament as late as November in the year 2003, and we have laid the Report 20 months before the deadline, a unanimous Report, that does not change the boundaries of one Opposition member, and we are being

told that we are immoral to bring such a fine document in this Parliament, laid 20 months before it was required to be brought.

Sir, there is nothing in the Constitution that speaks about 20 months. I subscribe to the view of giving people a reasonable interval between boundaries being adjusted and the calling of an election, thus, the conditions for fair and free elections have been established. As to whether it is two years, 18 months or one year, is a matter that I have not even myself yet begun to think about, because, Mr. Speaker, I am too busy holding the country through its course and fending off all of the effects of deceptive tendencies that overwhelm me in dealing with the social transformation of our society. I am too busy, Sir, being part of perhaps the most glorious transformation that was taking place in this society for 100 years, bringing a new technological literacy to the masses. This is a development that compares to the putting in of primary schools, because in the same way that primary schools gave people the capacity to read and write and be functional and literate, the resource centres will give the masses of people, a new function of literacy in the 21st Century.

I am too busy, Mr. Speaker, trying to reposition this economy and this society to cope with the new single market and single economy and to get ready for the FTAA and to deal with Europe and the WTO. Sir, this Parliament is busy, busy, busy trying to put in place all of the legislation to allow us to conceive of a new Barbados economy that could be competitive and vibrant, whether it is by way of the new Tourism Sustainable Bill, new legislation in relation to solvency, insurance, or new financial institutions. Sir, this Government is busy trying to anchor our development in substantial matters that can put in lasting progress and I have not been giving myself any latitude to begin to deal deeply with electoral matters. This, Sir, now sets the stage.

Sir, all I want to repeat is what we have always believed that Barbados has a long, proud record for free and fair elections. That record will not be contaminated by any attempt to gerrymander the boundaries to repudiate it. That record will not be contaminated by any effort to just bring boundaries today, and call elections tomorrow. We repudiate that as well, Sir, and I urge Honourable Members on my Side to get on with the business at hand to carry on with their positions in good order. The time for elections will be when the country is ready for them.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that has also served us in the public domain, is that the Government of this country is too expensive and this will add to an increase in cost for the Government. We are a \$6 billion economy and the two new seats would probably add less than \$200 000 to the cost to Government, in a \$6 billion economy. Sir, that is the measurement of what we accomplished in the past, and is not too expensive to allow for the representation of our people.

I want to say, Sir, that the conditions under which Honourable Members of this Parliament are required to carry on their representative duties have been exacting, very difficult and have been in need of substantial improvement. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, when I spoke in 1991, it was to indicate that I did not think that our constituencies were too large but I thought then, that Members of Parliament who have to deal with national representation as well as local representation needed more resources to carry on their work. I also felt, Sir, that political parties needed support because, from our Consolidated Fund, the taxpayers of Barbados subscribe to the work of institutions on our globe, in every sphere of economic, social, cultural and political endeavour, from the UN down and there is no issue about the support.

We support from the Consolidated Fund the work of non-governmental institutions. Sir, some of these have made a contribution, others have made some other marginal contribution. We support, as well, Mr. Speaker, religious organisations but there was an unwillingness to support the political parties which have been the bedrock of our democracy. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that political parties have, more or less, to be carried by the contributions of politicians, subscriptions of a faithful few, and what they could rake in from contributions of the general public.

I believe that it was the correct move to introduce to this country a subvention for political parties. I take note of the fact, Sir, that when we introduced \$150 000 a year to help political parties pay their bills, it was the same Democratic Labour Party which said that they were not going to take one red cent. Sir, even while the media was saying so, the Treasury was sending their cheque.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: That is true.

Sir, we have made a substantial improvement in the facilities made available to Members of Parliament to allow them to have a presence in their constituencies and facilities to be able to deal with the needs of the people. The persons who are sent to this House, have to deal with the needs of the people at the national level and at the local level. We have made provision, Sir, for the Government to pay the rent for the constituency offices, to equip them and meet part of the cost of running these offices. But it is a strain.
12.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to call names or be specific, but I have been open recently to representation, not on this Side, for further improvement in the condition of entities and facilities available to political organisations to enable them to better carry out their functions. I will repeat. I have been favourably disposed to representation coming not from this Side for improved conditions for entities and

institutions serving political interest in this country. I am not saying that to embarrass anyone but merely to indicate that it is a direction I feel we should go.

There are countless Barbadians, Mr. Speaker, who may be negatively described as persons of means, of great comfort, whose recourse is the representation that they get from their Members of Parliament. This stretches across a gamut of functions ranging from dealing with their welfare in the most fundamental ways, assistance with housing, employment and the whole range of things Members of Parliament ordinarily see in a democratic society. In the absence of local government, our preoccupation should be to improve those conditions rather than criticise them. So I do not buy the argument that we are by this means seeking to make the Government of Barbados too expensive and too large.

Sir, on the question of consultation, if you go back to Hansard of 1990 at page 4844 you would see a little banter that was engaged in between the then Honourable Member for St. Lucy, Mr. Evelyn Greaves and the then Honourable Member for St. Thomas, the present Chief Justice of Barbados, Sir David Simmons. Mr. Evelyn Greaves rose on a point of order to ask if Mr. Simmons was prepared to say categorically that the Barbados Labour Party had not consulted with the Members of the Commission. Mr. Simmons bantering says, "I can say categorically 'No'". Mr. Evelyn Greaves then responded, also bantering, "Then if you say 'No', we on this Side say 'No', too". That now is to be held onto as proof that there was no consultation.

Sir, I want to use that to underscore the validity of what the Constitutional Commission has done. The Barbados Labour Party has not given any directions to the Commission nor sought to tell them it is either/or. We gave them the latitude to do the field work and to make recommendations. It was on the basis of those recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer after the field work was done that the boundaries were drawn and the numbers decided upon. I would be lying to the House if I were to say that I took absolutely no interest in any of the matters that were under deliberation. I do not think anybody would believe that you could have a commission dealing with boundaries and politicians would just stand idly by and not have an interest in the matter. We did.

Mr. Speaker, I heard there were proposals to move Speightstown out of St. Peter and put it into St. James North, that is true. In much the same way there were proposals from some obscure source to move a large part of St. Lucy East, where the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has a majority of 300 voters, into St. Peter making his seat marginal or to cause him to lose. I did not make it, but I was aware of it. I must say this because other Honourable Members are going to have to speak about the changes as they affect them.

Mr. Speaker, boundary changes should be made in such a way as not to disrupt the character of communities. I use St. Peter as an example to quote a larger point. In 1991, the constituency of St. Peter was drawn because the parish boundaries were redrawn. The parish boundaries in 1991 were redrawn to even move Farley Hill National Park that the people of St. Peter saw as a St. Peter icon for over 300 years to elsewhere.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: It did not go as far as St. Joseph because that would have been a leap from geography but it went elsewhere. Up until 1991, Farley Hill was part of St. Peter but after the map of the country was redrawn and the parish boundaries drawn, Farley Hill was moved and there was a disruption to the concept of the parish and the community.

Sir, St. Peter and Speightstown have always been synonymous and there is such an identity between the two that the concept of St. Peter without Speightstown is like Christ Church without Oistins. To have a St. Peter constituency in which Speightstown is not in St. Peter, is something that is hard to grasp. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I would have made it clear that it would be very difficult to rationalise the concept of protecting the integrity of communities if you were to disrupt the concept of a community by putting Speightstown into another parish.

I believe it is fair to say that the Commission has so conducted its work as to keep communities intact and respect parish boundaries as far as practicable and as prescribed by the Constitution. As the Honourable Member for St. John required in 1991, the people of St. John find themselves now largely voting in St. John. There were times when St. George South was drawn in such a way that it was drawn from the parishes of St. John, St. Michael, Christ Church and St. George. So there are always going to be difficulties in trying to draw boundaries. But the Commission has been sensitive and has been trying to keep communities intact as far as practicable. So Honourable Members who represent these affected constituencies would have an opinion to express.

I would be lying, Sir, if I did not say that I had an opinion to express when I heard there were proposals to move a large part of Speightstown out of the constituency of St. Peter and put it into St. James. In my view that is not an issue and it is not about the majority. When I ran for election the first time in 1984 my result was minus one, then it went to over 200, then it went to over 300, then it went to over 650, then it went to 1 400 and then it went to 3 600. So to redraw the boundaries are not a problem for me in terms of majority if I agree to be a candidate at elections, what matters is the integrity of the community to which the constituency applies.

Mr. Speaker, there are 23 constituencies that have been affected by these boundary changes. St. James North has been affected by the inclusion of a part of St. Peter that voted for me two to one in the last election but which historically used to vote for the Democratic Labour Party. St. Lucy and St. Andrew have not been changed. St. Joseph has been adjusted by the removal of a district in St. Thomas that arguably should not have been in St. Joseph in the first instance but it was put in St. Joseph for reasons that had more to do with someone's perception of how it was going to affect their majority in the past but it was a part of St. Thomas. That part of the constituency of St. Joseph is being brought back into the constituency of St. Thomas and logically so. St. James Central has been created. St. James South which was one of the largest constituencies in the country with over 10 000 people when the average should be just over 7 000 is still large within the average prescription and there are no strange boundaries.
12.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, St. Michael North West has been retained. There has been consequential adjustments in all the Christ Church seats and some of the St. Michael seats because we could not have made an adjustment as great as that required because of the size of the four seats in south east Barbados, without those adjustments extending far down into St. Michael. So, St. Michael South will now carry part of the constituency that used to be Christ Church West. On that hangs the tale that the part of St. Michael South which comes from Christ Church West is now part of the parish of St. Michael. We are trying to bring back integral part of these communities as far as possible. St. Michael North East has also been expanded to the point where it is over 7,000 persons.

Sir, the point I am making is that the great value of the Report that has been presented to Parliament is that when the Commission first started its work, 14 of the constituencies on the electoral landscape of Barbados were in conflict with the Constitution. Now all 30 constituencies will fit the description of the Constitution, as recommended by the Commission.

Mr. Speaker, we have now taken a situation where half of the constituencies were of a size that were not in keeping with the Constitution, have rejoined the boundaries on the basis of unanimous decision by all the members of the Commission, where all constituencies now conform to the Constitution and where we now have a duty to this Parliament to say whether that will be accepted or not.

Mr. Speaker, I have no basis upon which I can repudiate the work of the Commission, as represented in this Report before Parliament. I say that, conscious of the constitutional responsibility that will fall on my shoulders if this House were to decide that this Report is not of a satisfactory character and left it to the Minister to draw those

boundaries. I have already spoken of the great extent to which detailed objective work was undertaken to give us a Report that could face the test of objectivity. I cannot replace that objectivity that went into the research and into the development of the data that was available to the Commission and the set of information that can be regarded as being informed and of a higher objectivity.

It would have made sense to repudiate this Report and to ask the Minister to redraw the boundaries if those who are asking for that to be the result of this Report, then tell the Minister what are the criteria that must be taken into account which were not taken into account by the Commission that are of a higher level of fairness and objectivity in the development of the Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, want to thank the Commission for its work. I want to commend this Report to Parliament as constituting an incontrovertible basis upon which the proud record of Barbados for free and fair elections can be pursued in the future. I want to commend the Report to Members of the Opposition who have been, in a special way, protected by the Commission by reason of being the only Members of this Parliament who do not have to face changed boundaries in the next election. I commend it to the entire country as something that is of credit to this country. In that spirit, Sir, I do beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting do now suspend until 2.15 p.m.

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

The question that the Honourable House do now suspend until 2.15 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I believe you were justifiably alarmed, though it would not be unparliamentary if I said that if we are not careful, the very Parliament in which we sit, would end up being the greatest threat to our democracy in Barbados.

In the debate that just started, it is clear that in a real sense, the outcome is already settled. From the Government's Side, the Members have basically started, both through their Leader and in the Press, that they

believe the Report of the Commission is a fair and balanced one and is worthy of their support.

I believe the Honourable Member for St. Peter took, in a sense, what was an unprecedented step of not even allowing the Report to speak for itself but by deciding it was necessary for him to cut down every critic in every nook and cranny in this country who has expressed any minor and significant dissent relative to the Report. That is why I say, Sir, that if we are not careful, this Parliament will end up being the greatest threat to our democracy in Barbados.

Sir, down through the years, I have taken a different view relative to the role of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West will remember – I have always taken a strong view and I do not resile from that view. Many people may not remember it but I have been in this Chamber long enough to be able to pull from the record and to reiterate my concerns. I do not believe we need to have that debate today but I have always been of the view that it is not enough to vest impartiality in a Boundaries Commission which is not bound by any law to be impartial. Therefore, we go through a whole charade every time there is a boundaries Report by pretending that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is so impartial and so sacrosanct. We have even protected them by way of an outer clause so that their actions and the actions of persons functioning under the Commission cannot be questioned in a court of law. After all of that, we still have in the law that if we fail to agree to the Report, the matter should go before the Minister responsible for Elections.

Sir, from as far back as 30th January, 1990, I set out my views relative to the current law.

If someone had said that a Report was written in a living room or in Roebuck Street, then that could not be offensive to the provisions of the Constitution, nor could it be offensive to some Members of this House, including former Members. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter has reminded me of an exchange that had taken place in here, of which I had not seen until he had reminded me. I was only looking at my contribution in the 1990 Debates but when the Honourable Member drew my attention to it, perhaps the Honourable Member should have said what the current Chief Justice – not in that capacity and I am not reflecting on him in that capacity but as a former Member of Parliament had then said about the Boundaries Commission.

Sir, at page 4844, the Hon. D. A. C. Simmons said:

“In the composition of the Commission, two great parties of State were represented and my people’s integrity has never been questioned in this House or outside and particularly so in relation to the particular job they were doing of trying to refashion the boundaries if it were necessary to do so. In reality, I am

satisfied that the political party would have the opportunity overtime to have their views represented to their appointees on the Commission and I am being very practical. No one could tell me that the persons who were nominated by the DLP, from time to time, did not consult with the leadership of the DLP as to what was being proposed and how to do certain things...”

At that point, Mr. E. E. Greaves got up on a point of order and said:

“Am I correct in understanding the Honourable Member for St. Thomas to say that the three Members of the Commission, that is Mr. Jordan, Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Serrao, were in consultation with the BLP on this Report?”

Mr. Simmons’ response was:

“And with the DLP because they all sat together in a consultative assembly on a weekly basis, the three and the two.”

Mr. Greaves interjected again to say:

“What I am endeavouring to find out from the Honourable Member, based on what he has said, is if the three Members who were nominated by the BLP were in consultation with the Leader of the BLP and Honourable Members in here on the contents of the Report and on the position which they took on this Report.”

The Honourable Member, of course, called it banter because, suddenly Mr. D. A. C. Simmons put in reverse, while moving forward and said:

“I can answer him categorically ‘No’ on that, Sir.”

So having said in the first instance that it was clear that the Commissioners consulted with their respective...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Mr. Greaves then said:

“In which case then I think it can be said categorically that the Members who were appointed by the DLP were similarly not in consultation with the Members of the Commission.”

Sir, Mr. Simmons started by saying his understanding was that he was satisfied the political parties had been consulted.

Sir, I am not against consultation between political parties and members of the Commission but I think there is a slight difference in the way in which the DLP has, down through the years, approached this matter and in the way the BLP has approached it.

2.20 p.m.

Sir, I can say that from personal testimony. The first Chairman was a very close friend of mine and I was in Chambers with one of the first Democratic Labour Party members on the Commission and, therefore, had a sense of the manner in which they went about building consensus. Sir, that did not mean that members were naive enough to believe that Commissioners did not have views which represented the views of their political parties. Where we draw the line is that the Constitution of Barbados severely restricts the role of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission to consider delineation of boundaries on the basis of numbers.

It seems to me that the Barbados Labour Party is always saying that this is the basis but underlying all of that, there are other factors brought to bear in determining how boundaries are drawn. If that is so, then the Report should reflect those other factors. It is a grave injustice to Parliament and the Minister responsible for elections for a Report to be presented which essentially gives the impression that the Commissioners are only following the constitutional formula which is trying to get boundaries to coincide with the mathematical formula when in fact, we know that there are several other factors that come into play into the minds of the members of the Commission when they are making that decision.

Sir, I will not be part of any political chess game in here nor am I going to permit persons not elected to this Parliament but have constitutional duties to believe that they are going to push and pull me around and give the impression that lofty ideals inform elements of decision-making but when you look behind it, it smacks of political decisions. Sir, if that is so, let us say so up front, stop pretending and vesting the Commission in some kind of sanctity as the legislation did when it was passed some years ago and as Members are wont to do in these debates.

Sir, I engage in this debate even though it is a *fait accompli* because I think the Democratic Labour Party has a case to put. The case is not to be put to members of the Barbados Labour Party or their supporters. That is not where our interest lies because we are all accountable at the end of the day to the people of Barbados whether you are a constitutional authority, like the Parliament of this country, the Boundaries Commission itself or the Minister of Elections, should he be asked to exercise his discretion.

In this House we are representatives of the people which brings us into direct contact with individuals who make decisions in this country about whom they elect and

are entitled to express their views. Despite the threat of criticism and all the other threats which I have heard in the course of the lead up to this particular debate, Barbadians are entitled to comment. They are even more entitled to comment because in Barbados we have a Boundaries Commission that makes decisions without reference to any public hearing or without reference to any public accountability at that level.

I have been arguing from 1990 that the Boundaries Commission needs to go into the communities where it is proposing to make changes and seek the feedback from the persons living in those communities. What happens in our system is that a Report, shrouded in secrecy is presented to the Minister of Elections. He brings it to the House, we speak to each other about it, decisions are made relative to boundary changes without reference to the capacity of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission to do the things that need to be done in preparation for an election, without a comment on the motivating factors other than those which the Constitution permits, which go into the preparation of the debate, and without comment about the suitability of changes being made and the time of those changes.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the debate is not between me and Members in this House. I believe I am putting a position that, by and large, represents the Democratic Labour Party's position in this Resolution as well as the position of those persons who have expressed views that may not be the Democratic Labour Party's view but may be relevant to this Parliamentary debate because they must not be silenced by the reign of terror visited by certain people's tongue. They must not be frightened that because they say something that some person somewhere, functioning under certain privileges, will be able to say what he likes about them. They must be free to communicate and receive ideas and function on the basis of balance and fair play.

Mr. Speaker, the Resolution basically asked us to approve the draft Electoral and Boundaries Commission (Review of Boundaries) Order, 2002. It is asking us to approve that the Commission recommended 30 constituencies and to note that the Report had been laid in accordance with the Report.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that we differ with the opinions of the nominated members of the Commission and those nominated by the Democratic Labour Party should not confuse anybody who understands the functioning of political parties or the functioning of the Democratic Labour Party.

2.30 p.m.

The Commissioners are appointed and are required to act under their constitutional mandate. The Democratic

Labour Party is not created by the Constitution of Barbados. It is entitled to reject any Report. In fact, I will go as far as to remind the Honourable Members of this House that in 1996, I think it was, when we sent a representative to sit on the Constitution Commission, my letter in response clearly said that my Party reserves the right to disagree with the recommendations of our member. The reason for that was that we do not appoint proxies to sit on committees. We do not appoint people and give them instructions, if not you could appoint anybody to sit on a boundaries commission because all they would need to do is to take instructions from a political Party.

I would not diminish the stature of the members appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister to believe, and he confirmed it today, that they act on his instructions alone or that the only mandate they have is the one that comes from the Barbados Labour Party. I would have never appointed a former senior public officer and an attorney-at-law, two intelligent Barbadians, to sit on a Commission only to carry a message from the Leader of the Democratic Labour Party or from the General Council of the Democratic Labour Party into the Commission, particularly because the mandate of the Commission is narrower than the mandate of a political Party.

There are things about the formula that can be questioned. Sir, that is not for the Commissioner to deal with, that is for us to deal with as Members of Parliament. There are things about the way in which the Commission goes about its business that we are entitled to question as members of political Parties and that must always be so. Therefore, I differ fundamentally, at least I assume so because one is not sure what it is.

On the one hand, the Government is praising to the hilt the contribution of members of the Commission, with which I agree, but at the same time it is giving the impression that all the Commission, that is appointed by the Barbados Labour Party is here to do, is to carry a message on behalf of the Party. Sir, that is why they are arguing that those appointed by the Democratic Labour Party should only have been there to carry the message of the Democratic Labour Party to the Commission.

Sir, that is absurd and those persons on the other side who are peddling that nonsense, I do not mean on the Other Side of the House, I should say on the other side of the political divide who are peddling that kind of nonsense should stop doing so and at least get the Electoral and Boundaries Commission to function above that level of partisanship, which I do not think it would deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I think that there is a fundamental difference that this scenario presents. We take our responsibilities under the Constitution very seriously when we identify persons to serve on the Electoral and Boundaries

Commission. The criteria did not include the blind rubber-stamping of any Party's position nor did it require that the members should toe the Party line and it would be an insult to the intelligence of members if they were required to do so because the Constitution delineates their responsibilities which are substantially different from what affects the debate at a political level in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I doubt very much that the persons who created the Boundaries Commission would have intended that Commissioners were to be so debased in their functioning that they would only take instructions from political Parties. At least I thought that was the case.

Sir, our representatives, as professionals in their own right, were given full latitude to evaluate and act upon the information that was put before them. The Democratic Labour Party does not supply that information or the Barbados Labour Party does not supply it. Public Officers carry out the evaluation and make the recommendations, who are responsible for the enumeration and electoral matters, present information to the Commissioners. It is on the basis of that information, Sir, that the Commissioners should make their decision and I feel extremely strong about this.

I also feel that it is important to recognise that the Members of the Commission are not politicians and they are not political activists, at least I hope not. I can certainly speak for those that are there now and by and large the Honourable Member for St. Peter states that he speaks to all of the members of the Commission and I believe that is so across the divide. There is only one member that I do not know and I cannot speak for those I do not know. Sir, for those that I know and whom I have business or other relations with, I am satisfied with the level of their integrity and ability. They are not political activists. Therefore, we feel strongly that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission should not be politicised nor should its autonomy, independence or integrity be compromised in anyway.

There was an innuendo earlier in this debate that somebody had recommended certain changes to certain constituency boundaries. Let me make it abundantly clear that the persons who represented the Democratic Labour Party were not on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party, and they assured me not otherwise, and did not recommend any specific changes to any constituency boundaries. Sir, the point that needs to be made clear is not their responsibility. They took the larger mandate from the Party.

Mr. Speaker, what I think is particularly disconcerting about the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Peter is that he would have given the impression that the only time this issue of the amount of time for the implementation of the recommendations of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission came up was prior to this Report

being delivered. Sir, he gave the impression that I suddenly came up with this idea, communicated it to my representatives and they then took it to the Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Sir, the 1998 Report which was laid in this House but was never acted on, because elections were called the same time that it was laid, in that Report on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party. Let me see if they were the same two.

Asides

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, the Report that was laid at the end of November, 1998, paragraph 20, page 9 states that

“no changes to boundaries at this time be recommended since they considered that such changes as unnecessary, should be made within two years of the previous elections without partisanship and should reflect:

- (1) the parish boundaries.
- (2) the integrity of communities.
- (3) consideration of size, topography as well as the population of the constituency.”

Sir, this was the Democratic Labour Party’s position, not since 1999. This represented the Democratic Labour Party’s position for a long time.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Therefore, the idea that all of a sudden our Commissioners were given this mandate is incorrect. What the Honourable Member does not remember is that he was the one who said that he agreed with the position of my Commissioners. That is what he said. The Honourable Member for St. Peter got up in here and agreed and had support from a number of Members, including the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, agreed with Maurice King that the powers of the Prime Minister should not be diminished in any way.
2.40 p.m.

That was not the view of the Barbados Labour Party commissioners but it was the view of the Democratic Labour Party commissioners, which shows you how fickle, Sir, some of these assertions have turned out to be and there is this constant attempt to use Parliament as a platform to diminish. In the constitutional debate, I could have gotten up very childishly and sought to create a division philosophically or otherwise between members on that side and the Chairman of the Commission and other members of the Commission because they made some serious recommendations about the

powers of Prime Ministers, many of which I agree, but I shied away from that. Even though I disagreed with my commissioner, I did not think it was necessary to be childish and seek to stake out a claim of omnipotence as if my word is the last and only word in Barbados and at the end of the day bring the debate to a level from which it would never recover, and I do not propose to do so now.

The Democratic Labour Party’s position has been consistently laid out from January 1990 and is reflected in two Reports. I will go further in that regard. January 30, 1990, I spoke in the debate on the Report of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission and I said at page 4833. I quote from the Report, page 8 paragraph 17 in which it stated:

“On the basis of the decision taken at Paragraph 15, the Commission found it inappropriate to consider any of the options identified above since either of them would have resulted in a major disruption of existing constituencies.”

The then Commission opted not to make changes that had been recommended and they had the courtesy to set out the other issues that arose but they said they were not going to go that route because they saw that as a major disruption of existing constituencies. I said, Sir:

“So the Boundaries Commission, as I understand it, made its decision on the basis that it did not wish to disrupt the existing constituencies. Therefore, I can find no fault with the Report on that basis. In other words, if you are saying that is the reason why you are going to come to the conclusions you are coming to, well, it seems to me that the Commission was perfectly right in coming to those conclusions on that basis.”

I am saying that if the current Boundaries Commission examined the options – it does not set them out in the Report and I do not like that – and had come to a fair, balanced and reasonable conclusion that none of those options could work and on the basis of the constitutional formula under which it functioned it had to recommend 30 seats. On the basis it functioned, Sir, I cannot have a basis to quarrel with the recommendation of the Commissioners, but, Sir, I am saying to you that from the outset I always took the position and I am going to get to that now that the work of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, circumscribed as it is by the Constitution, is defective.

I said on page 4834:

“This Boundaries Commission to the best of my knowledge has not held public hearings on the alignment of boundaries and that might also be an important aspect of consideration of constituency realignment. The persons who are affected by

the decision should be consulted. Now it does not forbid it”.

[meaning the Constitution does not forbid it, Sir.]

“The legislation does not forbid it and, therefore, perhaps it never entered the minds of the Boundaries Commissioner. The fact that it does not forbid it should have entered their mind but they did not carry out any public assessment as to how these boundary changes would impact on communities. I am saying that I believe that this is one of the things that should be done.

Now the question, therefore, has to be on what basis do you make decisions to allocate constituencies or on what basis do you make decisions as to the increase or decrease in seats. This is something that the legislation should clearly set out so that any questions that arise should be on the basis of what the confine of the role of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is.”

At the end of that particular debate I set out five suggestions relative to the operation of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission. This is from 1990. I made out a case for changes to the Constitution and for a number of other things which I will set out.

First of all, Sir, I recommended that the formula should be removed from the legislation and that in place of that formula, the Constitution should stipulate the broad factors that the Commission should take into account in arriving at the decision as to how constituencies should be aligned. I said then, “It does not have to be a mathematical formula; it should be a formula that is based on sound social policy, on human considerations and on policy decisions that are taken by the persons who at the end of the day are accountable to the public”.

In other words, what I am saying there, Sir, is that we had the power to set out for the Boundaries Commission very clearly the broad factors that they should take into account, including the question of numbers, but not limited only to the matter of numbers in realigning the constituency boundaries. I said that we have to set out those criteria for the Commission and ask it to stick to those criteria in making a decision. If not, as I said you could have a Report with one very flimsy reason for establishing 50 constituencies in Barbados.

I asked the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, and I am not being altogether facetious, but who could question a recommendation in a Boundaries Commission Report which would be as absurd as to suggest that the boundaries be realigned to give a political party an advantage? Suppose that was written in the Report, “we recommend that these boundaries be realigned to ensure that

the Democratic Labour Party wins the next election”. On the basis of what is in the Constitution...

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not know that the courts would have the power to deal with that as long as they stick to the constitutional formula whatever else they say would be irrelevant. How would that be relevant? The Honourable Member says no. You see that is part of the problem. The reason why the Honourable Member says no is because the Constitution does not say that the political parties recommend the Commissioners. They say the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition recommend Commissioners to sit on the constitutional commission. What the Government is saying is that notwithstanding that, the Commissioners should consult very closely with the parties who sent them to sit on the Commission. The public does not know that. The public must pretend that you have five paragons of political virtue, and maybe they are, Sir, sitting in a Commission totally uninfluenced by the matter of partisan viewpoints, that they are so detached from the political scene in Barbados that they do not know where the potential Barbados Labour Party candidate for St. James Central lives so they did not align the boundary to make sure that it took into account where he lives so that he is living in his constituency.

They did not save the Honourable Member for St. Philip South from the boundary changes so that he would end up living outside of his constituency. I am saying that if we were to go along with those arguments somebody might say that the Commission was very careful to ensure that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South remained a resident of St. Philip South. Sir, we are to pretend that the Commission is detached from the political reality that the people who appoint them do not talk to them that there is no influence. Sir, I am not willing to pretend. I put two intelligent people on a Commission. They have a job to do under the Constitution and I expect them to do it. As far as I am concerned, they did it and I am entirely satisfied with what they did. I am not going to pretend that they are aloof from what happens in Barbados but the one thing none of my commissioners can say is that I instructed them at any point how any boundary in Barbados should be realigned, because it never happened.

Sir, that was the first point. The second point is once the formula is removed you will then insert in the Constitution the criteria that the Commission should take into account in coming to its conclusion. That criteria might include topography, other social factors and whatever other factors Parliamentarians think are relevant to the determination of constituency boundaries.

The third point related to political broadcasting so it is not relevant. The fourth point was that the Boundaries

Commission should be required to hold public hearings in which the persons who are affected by the decisions of the Commission and others may appear and say why they are dissatisfied because the only way the people of Kendal, St. John for example, and at that time the Commissioners wanted to take Kendal and put part of it onto St. Philip, part in St. John and part in St. George. Now Kendal is one of the most isolated communities in Barbados, Cliff and Kendal. You do not pass them on the way, you have to leave a main road to go into Kendal and when you get there you are going from St. Philip and you end up in St. John when you leave Kendal. Likewise, Cliff. These are areas that are entirely isolated and the proposal of the then Boundaries Commission was to so divide up the constituencies as to put the southern part of Kendal in St. Philip the northern part in St. John and the western part in St. George South.

The point I was making is that since they had not held public hearings the only way they would know that the people of Kendal opposed such a change was when they heard from me as Parliamentary representative, and that is not good enough. They should not have to wait to hear only from the incumbent. There are other people who have an interest in boundary changes, including the people who vote, community leaders, church leaders, potential candidates, they all should have the opportunity whether they use it or not to appear before the Boundaries Commission and to make submissions. I believe that other persons who have served on commissions can tell you how helpful such representation can be in raising issues that people may not have thought about before.

All of this consultative government that we have nowadays...they have town hall meetings. Every time the Honourable Member for the City gets up she can list all the consultations that have been held in Barbados and I am proud of her for those things but they cannot say a matter that affects Barbadians, the only occasion they can exercise their democratic rights, one of the only occasions for some people that they ever get involved in anything, have any power at all, that they are not entitled to have their view recorded in relation to that matter. I am saying, to me, that is unfair.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West said so, but if you write the Report in the wrong place and if other factors are relevant you are not going to want to hear anybody. You want to hear the people who appointed you. That is where the Commission needs to develop a sense of independence and get out there and get on the ground, assuming they do not get on the ground at election time. Get out there before elections when the Report is written and do what needs to be done to hear the views of the public relative to the recommendations that they are making.

I said that should be included and not by sticking up a list in a school room and telling people that it is there go and look at it. Sir, that is not modern Government. We are going

to provide a list, and rearrange boundaries. Let people have a say before the change is made because they are entitled to that and, Sir, those public hearings should be advertised to go hand in hand with public education programmes on the functions of the Commission, so that the public can come and comment on the proposed changes. The last recommendation I made in January 1990 was that the procedure after the rejection of the Report is flawed.
2.55 p.m.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter made heavy weather about that, and I do not know why he did so, but he seems to think that I feel safer with a boundaries commission, the majority of whose members are appointed on his recommendation, than I feel with him. In other words, having told us that he had some input into what his Commissioners did, the Honourable Member for St. Peter then comes to the conclusion that we would be worse off, if the matter were in his hands than if we accepted the Report of the Commission. Sir, that confuses me, and it really confounds me because I would assume that if he advised the Commissioners, and he has not denied it, from time to time on issues and I say that there are other people who, no doubt, have had their say, then one assumes that he would come to the same conclusion, that the Commissioners would come to. So why, unless his other Members disagree? There may be another problem, as happened in 1990, but, Sir, if that is the case, then the Honourable Member for St. Peter should say so. I am not interested in any vain threat that if you do not accept the Report of the Commission, then I would draw the boundaries. Draw them and call an election, when you finish drawing them, if you so desire. Let the public deal with that. Let the people who have to vote deal with that, if the Honourable Member for St. Peter wants to draw boundaries, well, he can tell his Members to reject the Report.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: That is right. It has happened before. It is nothing new, Mr. Speaker, so that is an idle statement.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I disagreed with the Report.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: ...and they were properly drawn thereafter. You may not think so, but I am not residing on that, I supported how they were drawn. The reason why I supported it is because the Boundaries Commission at that time was seeking to carve up the outskirts of St. John, such that it would lose its parish character.

Sir, Honourable Members forget. When I first ran in 1987, when I reached the record of 4 108 votes, almost a quarter of those votes came from St. Philip: Brereton, Sunbury, Ebenezer, Carrington, Halton. They were all in St. John, because the boundary ran down a road and then opened up. That was done by the Barbados Labour Party to take the Democratic Labour Party's strong part of St. Philip from St. Philip North and put it onto St. John. If you put it on St. John, that is just gravy. That was gravy for the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, at that time it was proposed that they would take off Sunbury, Ebenezer and those areas I mentioned earlier, and then cut up Kendal.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Those kinds of things need to be obliterated and they are ways to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we were talking in 1990 against that background, so we could not support the Report. The people in Kendal were shouting "blue murder". They wanted to stay together as a community. It was something like 250 votes: 120 going one way, 35 going another way, 85 going another. Sir, that does not make sense, under any circumstance, particularly in rural Barbados, so I objected to the Report and it was redrawn. The person who redrew the boundaries, at that time, still got criticised by his own members for drawing up a constituency that essentially put a member of the Barbados Labour Party into the House of Assembly.

The criticism then was that the creation of the Christ Church South Constituency was a stronghold for the Barbados Labour Party.

Aside.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes, people said so. As I say, at a political level, you got licks both from the Opposition, then and from your own Members for creating a constituency that favoured the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, as long as you are taking those kinds of approaches, you will lose all around. Therefore, the fact that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has issued a threat that if we do not accept the Report, he would draw the boundaries. Let him draw them, Sir, and let him do all the things he has the power to do under the law, because nobody can stop him, not even Honourable Members on that Side can stop him, even when they raise legitimate concerns about what is happening in their constituency. So how could I think that it is possible for me to stop the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter from doing all the things that he wants to do in Barbados?

Sir, Item No. 5 was that where the Report is withdrawn or rejected, it did not make sense to throw it back into the hands of the Minister. What should be done after that, where Parliament does not accept the Report, is that there should be something like a Joint Select Committee of Parliament to which the Report of the Boundaries Commission that was rejected would be referred. Honourable Members of Parliament at that level, before it came to Parliament for debate and before the Minister redrew the boundaries, would have to have the benefit of the comments on the Report of that Joint Select Committee of Parliament. Sir, it would be almost like an appeal mechanism from the changes that were recommended by the Boundaries Commission. Then, that would save us by taking the matter directly out of the hands of the Minister.

I also said, Sir, there is no greater exponent of the ideals of political democracy than the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. He is the greatest proponent of it and yet the very legislation that he brings, puts the Government in the unfortunate position where it has to move a Report, possibly reject it, and then the decision rests in the hands of a Minister who, at the end of the day, can make whatever adjustments are necessary. So I blame the Honourable Member for Christ Church West for drafting an imperfect piece of legislation that has landed us in the problems that we had with the Boundaries Commission from the time it was established.

It needs to be reviewed because it is too limited for the Commissioners, who always end up in a scenario where they are going to be looking at boundaries every eight years or so, and when they look at those boundaries, they are going to be constrained by the fact that the parties that have selected them, are not going to want to give up any constituencies. I heard all of the arguments in here about St. Michael South and all of that kind of thing. Those arguments do not apply, Sir, because if you gave up St. Michael South, which the Honourable Member for St. Peter said had always voted for the Democratic Labour Party but once, and created a St. Philip West, the same argument would apply. St. Philip had always voted for the Democratic Labour Party, particularly that part that would be taken off to create St. Philip West, until it was recently redrawn, the original scenario in relation to St. Philip West.

Sir, you cannot argue that Barbados has become a single constituency in which opinions do not relate to constituencies but go across the divide, and then at the same time act as if the numbers of past elections are going to be relevant in terms of political support for future elections.
3.05 p.m.

Sir, I would hardly expect that the Honourable Member for St. Peter could abolish St. Michael South. He could not, not with the Honourable Member being his chief

economic strategist. I heard him said something like that this week and although I cannot remember the exact words he used, I will adopt them. He could not abolish the City of Bridgetown either.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: He could not abolish the City of Bridgetown, not that it was not being considered oblivious, it seems, to the Honourable Member for the City's reaction. I know the Honourable Member for the City would not take kindly to that, but it was being considered at one point.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: So you understand the problem. He will not abolish constituencies and at the rate we are going we will forever be adding constituencies in Barbados regardless of how many Bermuda and Britain have. Unless a Government is strong enough to abolish an Opposition constituency, I do not have any illusion about that, Sir, but I doubt very much that it would happen, or abolish one of its own constituencies, I doubt very much that would happen as well. On the current trend and based on the legislation as it is now, it is likely that we are going to continue to increase constituencies in Barbados. That is something that needs to be looked at because it constrains us and the Electoral and Boundaries Commission because at one point they were looking at abolishing two constituencies and adding only one.

So all of the other options we heard at one point flying around, none of them were feasible and not based on the constitutional provisions because if you start from the existing number of constituencies and move on, you are never going to have a situation where you will get any less. The law is clear. The constitution provisions are clear.

The fact that the view of the majority of the commissioners dovetail and reflect 100 per cent of what was being said by senior members of the Barbados Labour Party, apparently, it is not to be commented on. We are to act as if they were merely saying that and the Commissioners heard it somewhere or it dropped off the back of a truck and they found out by some process of osmosis. Therefore, what we have here then is a situation where by our failure to be frank and open, we have compromised the independence and the autonomy of the outcome of the deliberations of the Commission.

Sir, let me move on to the comments of the Honourable Member for St. Peter. All of the justification that the Honourable Member for St. Peter made in respect of the recommendation of the Report was based on the existing formula. So unless he is going to be creative enough to step

outside of the four corners of the existing formula and ask himself this question, is the current election law in Barbados acceptable and are there changes to the law that need to be made because we discussed that the bulge in the constituencies are in the south of Barbados and what impacts upon the growth areas. All of that only has relevance because the Commissioners are bound by a mathematical formula that said a constituency must not rise above 10 per cent or fall below 10 per cent of the average. If we remove that and free the Commissioners to look at factors that make sense including the wholeness of communities and so on, then we would not have been subjected to that lengthy and unnecessary justification by the Honourable Member for St. Peter this morning. That was a mathematical justification. It suits accountants, economists and people who like numbers and who try to get things to mathematical perfection. In my view, that is not what drawing of constituency boundaries should be about.

That brings me to the point that a political party has an option and the latitude to go beyond the surface of the recommendations and the law to examine in greater detail the ramifications of these proposals and all the other issues that would be relevant which normally, if they did not have this mathematical formula, could have been considered by the Commission. Some of those factors, Sir, are the cost of the two additional seats. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter cannot settle a wages dispute with the civil servants but can tell us that \$200 000 is not a lot of money.

Sir, there are some people who cannot get computers in their constituency office. There are some old people who need \$5 000 to fix their homes or to buy a wheelchair. So how can we justify the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter's argument that \$200 000 is not much in a \$6 billion economy. That may be true but do you know what you can do with that \$200 000, and there are people who are legitimately entitled to question it.

We must never become so snug, complacent and self-assured in here as to believe that the world revolves around the 28 people in here. There are other needs to be met in Barbados. To set up a constituency community centre calls for \$130 000. That was one of the areas of social transformation that the Honourable Member for St. Peter talked about. So how would two additional members socially transform Barbados? How can we justify adding two additional members to all the others who are underemployed on the Back Bench? There are people on the Back Bench with great talent and ability who are just languishing on the Back Bench and being treated like outside children. Yet those same people are the ones who are going to justify the addition of two additional underemployed people to be added to the Parliament of Barbados at a cost of approximately \$200 000. I did not even know that is what the cost will be but it may very well end up to be more than that, and

there are people who are entitled to question it. Because we are happy with what we do, we must not believe that everybody in Barbados is happy about it. I do not think that is so and the people are entitled to comment on it as part of the process of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, what is the plausibility of having an even number of seats, given the Trinidad and Tobago experience? Sir, the Government uses Trinidad and Tobago selectively. They put constitutional reform on hold because of what President Robinson was doing in Trinidad and Tobago. They started to get nervous about the idea of a president doing things and not being able to dispatch a letter to Buckingham Palace to get rid of him when he did things he was not to do. I heard with my own ears a member of the government saying that in light of the Trinidad and Tobago experience, some part of the constitutional reform have to be put on hold. So the major plank of the government's re-election which was constitutional reform, or so they said, has been put on hold because of what happened in Trinidad and Tobago.

We come now to the question of the number of seats. The Honourable Member for St. Peter dismisses what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago as being irrelevant to the circumstances of Barbados and adduces other aberrations including one in which he foresaw an independent person holding the balance of power becoming Prime Minister. That is nothing new, that happens all over the world but at least you have a government. The problem in Trinidad and Tobago is that you do not have a properly constituted government.
3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if a man has the strength to say, "Gentlemen, you have my support as long as you make me Prime Minister", there is nothing wrong in the Westminster model. That has happened on several occasions and not just in St. Vincent. There are several countries in the world where very strong minority parties that were holding the balancing power had made demands.

Sir, let us carefully reflect on the Trinidadian experience and who got appointed to whatever position, after being elected to the House of Assembly and who was holding that balance of power. It is that same person who is now giving trouble to the person who had appointed him to that position in relation to forming a government.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to carry the debate to the level to which the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter has put it, without being able to accommodate other view points, trying to smother all views to stop people from talking, attacking people just because they have raised the Trinidad situation, then it is relevant. It is not a matter for the Boundaries Commission but for political parties. No one can stop a member of a political party from having a view on matters like that.

Sir, the third point is the voting pattern of communities affected by these proposed changes. The Boundaries Commissioners are not supposed to get into that issue – and I assume they do not – but political parties can. It is perfectly legitimate for a political party to state they do not like how boundaries are being drawn because it gives an advantage to one party over the other. There is nothing wrong with that. This is still a democracy when I last checked. There are candidates in the BLP who the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter said at the elections, he had to carry over the finish line. It is coincidental that the demarcation of boundaries, as proposed in this Report, eases them a little.

Sir, it may not be that the Commissioners were looking at that, but I am entitled to say, as a citizen, as a voter of this country, and as a former leader of a political party, I am concerned that it appears as though that is the case if members are persuaded they are entitled to vote against it and have it resolved.

In 1990, that was being said by the BLP about the way in which boundaries can be drawn in some circumstances, prior to the existence of the Electoral and Boundaries Commissions. It was repeated today that in 1971, it was drawn by a politician on partisan grounds. In 1990, the impression was given as though the manner in which the then Minister responsible for the elections drew the boundaries was to disadvantage Members of the BLP. They went from three seats to ten seats.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West would always want to remind people, as does the current Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, that he was within striking distance. He said, and I heard him, that 1500 votes separated the Honourable Member for Christ Church West from the Opposition. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West, in his darkest hours, probably took up the Report and looked at how the boundaries were drawn and said perhaps if these boundaries were drawn, he would have won X or Y.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, we have to accept it but as I said, in your darkest moment, you still looked behind the verdict because no one ever believes they would lose. In the Westminster system, persons believe up to the very day, even though they cannot get anybody to get into their cars, that they will still win an election. Even Independents think that they are going to win. I had an Independent in St. John telling me that he is going to win. I said, fair enough, I cannot argue with you.

Sir, in some constituencies, members know that you feed constituency workers because you know that they are supporters but the Commissioner does not have to know that. They have a right to keep that confidential. In our

system, we are still entitled to say if we do not like how a boundary is drawn or that it is drawn for partisan reasons. That may not be so but no one can stop anyone from having that feeling if it looks that way. Let us not pretend that we are the only people who have a voice in relation to boundary matters simply because the Commission has consensus on a matter and after the boundaries are drawn, we are required to keep silent on the issue.

3.25 p.m.

Sir, the public is entitled to speak and we need to lift the level of this particular debate a little higher to understand that people are entitled to have views. The views may be erroneous but they are entitled to have views and nobody should come in here with guns blazing trying to shoot down every argument that the public adduces. The public should make their comments and allow the Commissioners to be opened to a breath of fresh air in relation to how boundaries are delineated in Barbados.

Sir, we went through a whole constitutional debate in here and Members on the Other Side waxed warm about the abolition of the Senate and about increasing this Chamber by ten seats with people who are elected on the basis of proportional representation. Sir, we heard about local Government and all the loftiest principles of constitutional reform were discussed in here based on a good Report presented by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West and his Commissioners but when we got to Parliament you would have thought that the next election was going to be fought on completely different terms in Barbados and we discovered that all of that creativity went into the stuff bin. We are now back to increasing the boundaries by two seats and it is business as usual in Barbados. Sir, all the talk about constitutional reform and making Parliament more effective has gone into the stuff bin and we are back to square one.

Sir, we heard from the highest official in the Barbados Labour Party that if there was one issue for which there should be a referendum it would be local Government. He said that if there were two issues on which they should be debate which were not mentioned in the Commission one was the question of proportional representation and the other was local Government and we should have a referendum on these two issues. Yet, the absence of local Government was used as an excuse for increasing the number of constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, we are playing with people's minds and I am not going to be part of it.

Sir, political parties are also entitled to question the current law and the role of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission because nobody is bound to accept the way the Constitution has designed the Electoral and Boundaries Commission or that it is cast in stone.

Sir, now that Honourable Members on the Other Side are in Government, we have the most wonderful electoral system in the world but that does not mean that some things about the way the Electoral and Boundaries Commission functions should not be questioned. Sir, I believe that politicians have a right to question these things.

Mr. Speaker, after the last elections I heard Honourable Members, including the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, arguing that the number of voters on the electoral list in Barbados was inflated. He also used the argument that he did not believe that there was a low poll in the last and he disputed the figures given by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission as representing the voting strength of Barbados. Yet those same figures that the Members of the Government questioned and said the list needed cleaning up are being used to carve out constituency boundaries in Barbados. This is another area of inconsistency by the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, no amount of threats or comments by anybody is going to stop us from being able to raise these issues.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party since 1998 made the point very clearly that the timing of changes is critical. In the first Report we said it should be done two years after the last elections which would be in the third year but it should be about midway. The Electoral and Boundaries Commission should Report, Government should make a decision at that stage as to whether it will agree with the debate, discuss it with the Opposition party and go ahead from there.

Sir, the idea in 1999 of a Report being in November 1998 was nonsense. It seems to me that people are entitled to question the idea now of making boundaries changes that are going to affect more than 20 constituencies in Barbados less than two years before a General Election. It is a reasonable criticism and something that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission itself should address largely because if the boundaries were agreed to, the orders were drafted up and then the Prime Minister called an election the day after, I would like to know whether the Electoral and Boundaries Commission could assure Barbadians that within the statutory time elections could be held in Barbados. Sir, they could not do it and this is why timing is relevant.

Sir, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter said to me that any changes to boundaries made within two years of an election would be taken seriously but, Sir, obviously I am wrong and in relation to the Honourable Member for St. Peter it is not the first time that I have been wrong.

Sir, in our system we practise consultation and I am not going to walk around Barbados every time the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter talks to me, go on a political platform, as was done in Dominica recently, and

tell everybody what I discussed with the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter. I do not believe in that, Sir. I think that would corrupt the entire political process.

Sir, I thought that it was inconceivable with the kinds of changes being contemplated that two years before an election would be a reasonable time unless, of course, some people were told about the changes a long time ago because in the last Estimates debate in the Senate, in March this year, I heard people talking about their constituencies and identifying areas in their future constituencies.

Sir, the option of abolishing two constituencies and replacing them with one has been recommended which is a legitimate thing for people to talk about, but all of those issues were dismissed by the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Sir, he could not concede the point. I have been in this House for 15 years and I have heard even the most partisan leader concede a point. I admire the Honourable Member for Christ Church West because when he agreed with the Opposition he said so.

Sir, the Opposition members or the people who write columns in the newspapers are not madmen. They are Barbadians who care about Barbados and the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter could concede a point here and there and not act as if he is the repository of all knowledge or the one who must be obeyed, that anything that flows from his mind or his political party is the final statement of moral law and if anybody questions it, something is wrong with that person, his business put on the street and that person is attacked and pilloried in the way that some Members have to endure in this Chamber.

Sir, this morning we were treated once again to one of those tirades in which every single critic was tarred with the same brush. I am concerned about that because it does not do Parliament any good and conduces to a situation where anybody could expect the Opposition to be cooperative or understand the Government's position.

Sir, I fully understand why the Commissioners came to the conclusion they did and I laud the work of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission and its members. They should be rewarded for the contributions that they have made over time, going beyond the call of duty, learning new ways to do things, innovating but more importantly, always consulting with both political Parties, and I am talking at the Civil Service level which I think has helped a lot in the way in which we have been able to conduct elections in this country.

3.35 p.m.

Our fundamental position is that these changes are not necessary at this time. We need not only consider voter

density but the point that the Honourable Member for St. Peter dismissed about the landmass that is being represented is vital, because there is a difference between a constituency in Barbados which has two or three housing areas and a very small landmass that only has high-rise housing. We now have high-rise buildings in some constituencies. Compared to St. Andrew, St. John and some parts of Christ Church and St. Philip, Sir, you canvass one area and cannot get back to that area in six months.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I know that is not your problem because once you go to church, the likelihood is that you will pass through the whole of your constituency but that is not so in rural areas.

Sir, I am certain that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West who lives in St. John, does not touch certain parts of St. John even though he walks every day and drives through the constituency, I am sure that there are some areas that he has not visited, places like Foster Hall or Venture.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, in rural areas it does make a difference and topography is relevant. The idea of dividing constituencies on the basis of numbers, to my mind, does not produce the best results. Therefore, I believe that the Commission should be empowered to look at those matters.

In 1990, I remember the Commission talking about topography and water courses. We went through a whole debate on the manner in which the boundaries were being redrawn and the relevant difference between rural and urban Barbados.

Sir, there are some constituencies that are not growing at all and I suspect St. Andrew might be one of such constituencies. St. John is not growing considerably, while there are some in rural Barbados that are growing at a phenomenal rate, for example constituencies like St. Thomas, St. James and St. Philip. Therefore, even though they were once rural, they are becoming more urbanised with a greater density of houses and people such that you are getting a division in St. Philip that more mirrors urban areas in terms of the physical size of the constituency.

Therefore, I believe that topography is still relevant as more demand is placed on representatives in rural areas and some of the issues that affect people in rural areas, such as the resurfacing of roads *et cetera* because we do not have local government, are often relevant and they become the issues that a parliamentary representative is required to deal with on a daily basis. The difference between the physical

development of urban Barbados and rural Barbados is something that needs to be taken into account in relation to the level of communication and that sort of thing for parliamentary representation.

I believe that if we wanted to do anything at this level outside of the recommendations of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, we would be considering ways to make it easier for persons in those rural areas to access their representatives. One can think of a number of reforms that can be introduced and which probably should form part of this debate as distinct from a consideration of a boundaries report in which decisions are restricted essentially to the numbers. We should be looking at ways in which we can so configure constituency boundaries in this country as to ensure that people get better representation and more accessible representation, particularly in the absence of local government.

Sir, if we take the changes that are recommended by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, we are going to be uprooting people in neighbouring communities and simply placing their names on constituency lists irrespective of the relationship that they have to the rest of that community. For example, the changes in St. Philip West, where people who voted in St. Philip South all their lives will not be part of St. Philip.

I remember in the 1999 debate, a gentleman who is here with us but who is not currently a parliamentary representative but here in a different capacity, spoke at length about the way in which St. George South had been cut up and truncated on its St. George border and also in areas of Boarded Hall and Frere Pilgrim. Once again, you have a situation in which those areas are attached to St. George South and they have been treated like outside children. The last parliamentary representatives that they remember are Peter Morgan and Maurice Ward because they have never been effectively integrated into the community of St. George as a whole.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: So irrespective of any constituency that they are voting in, they are culturally and otherwise linked to other communities and those are the areas like Frere Pilgrim and Boarded Hall. Sir, St. Philip is a parish with a very distinct identity and you tell people in one of the largest villages that they are to vote in St. John? Therefore, I do not believe that we should endorse a Report which at the end of the day is going to truncate those constituencies and go through communities and divide more. We should be looking at means of looking at the social connections and the cultural connections between communities and dividing the constituencies to meet those particular features.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, St. George North, St. George South, St. Philip North and St. Philip South are constituencies that can be looked at apart from the point that I made about the vulnerability of the sitting Members of Parliament. Sir, that also relates to St. Joseph where a part of that constituency is being added back onto St. Thomas where, on the face of it, the Member of Parliament for St. Thomas has what might appear to be an unassailable majority. Then you take an area that has, by and large, been 50/50 and then place it onto her unassailable majority so as to strengthen the hand. That is what some people would say of the sitting Member of Parliament for St. Thomas, who is alleged to be one of those persons who had to be brought over the finish line in the last elections.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, the Report is 100 per cent the wishes of the Government and I believe that the Commission does not get compromised by the occupational hazards of having to work under a Government that pretends that it does not consult, pretends that it is not giving directions but in fact gives directions to the Commissioners on how they are supposed to undertake their duties.

Sir, in that regard, I believe that we need to understand that we have to view the Report in that context. The Report also has to be seen against the background of whose interest it serves and in what tangible way the voters benefit. Sir, what about the St. Michael constituencies, small though they are, are they crying out for representation? The Honourable Member for the City left at the wrong time.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There are some St. Michael constituencies, like the City, where people argue that they do not have enough access to their Member of Parliament and that is a small constituency. How can increasing or reducing the number of eligible voters help the people who live in the City of Bridgetown? How will it improve representation? How will the boundaries be redrawn in order to make them more relevant? We can ask that question in many constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, if Members of Parliament do not take their work inside and outside of this Chamber seriously, and if the electorate do not let go of their "love affairs" and look at what they get out of representation, not the beauty contest, who looks better than who or who can speak better than who, but what they get at the end of the day from the nature of representation that they are offered in the current political system.
3.45 p.m.

They need to look at merit and performance and, in that regard, they need to ask themselves whether they are getting the representation that they voted for, whether they are not being taken for granted, whether this Government has not worked out that it knows the political measure of the people of Barbados and, therefore, feels that without recourse to their wishes, it can do anything, including increase the number of constituencies without having adequate consultation and addressing the issues that the Opposition and independent critics have raised as relevant issues in this particular debate.

As the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter paraphrased a quote when he said "that power without responsibility has been the role..." He did not quote correctly so let me: "Power without responsibility has been the role of the harlot throughout history." He got some of the words right, Sir, but he did not understand the context in which that statement was being made.

That statement was being made to Lord Beaverbrook who was the owner of several major newspapers in Britain and he was being told that the Press had power but no responsibility and the person who was making the comment likened the media to harlots throughout history. It was not directed at politicians. It would be an ingenious contortion that could make that political statement relevant to politicians. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter did not bring anybody in here and nobody came in, as the National Hero, the Right Excellent Sir Frank Walcott said, "in a box cart". Everybody in here was voted for to the best of my knowledge and the sooner that members let the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter know that the better.

If men and women can sit down in silence when a Prime Minister looks at an elected and sitting Member of Parliament and says that he has power without responsibility, having been elected, it tells you the extent to which this Government is off course and does not understand the nature of democracy. If there is one thing that every member in this House has to do in 20 months time it is to go back out to the public and ask the voters of this country for a vote, however it is done, whether by house to house, on political platform, on the telephone or by staying home, it has to be done and no elected representative who has to do that can be accused of having power without responsibility because the basis of his power is the intelligent electors in Barbados.

Sir, that statement is an attack on the electors in Barbados because at the end of the day what the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter is saying is that they irresponsibly allow people to come into this Chamber, warm seats and they continue to elect them because those people then enjoy power without responsibility. Sir, as I said, I think that is a dangerous statement to say in the context of

accusing persons who have that power without responsibility to be harlots. Not one, Sir, that I would have objected to years ago – although I am not saying the rules have changed, but when I first went into this House when you stepped out of line I used to hear the words, "Now, now!" and you were pulled back into line. I have noticed in recent times that perhaps out of deference to members you prefer people to get up and raise a point of order. I am not raising any point of order when somebody says something that I think tends to diminish the stature of a member of this Chamber because I think it is everybody's obligation to deal with that, including the person who is presiding. That is my view, Sir. When you hear something you do not like you are entitled without anybody prompting to say, "Not in here! These are the standards I am accepting."

It does not have to come from me, Sir, because like you I go to church and I know when something is wrong. I know and you know and neither one of us should condone it. Not that you have done so, Sir, but a pro-active approach in ensuring that members of this Chamber raise the standard of the debate is desirable. If not, we are going to enter the gallery and all of us, including you, Sir, as presiding officer, are going to suffer at the end of the day. We must all try to raise the standard of debate and therefore *ad hominem* attacks prompted by nothing other than criticism would need to be addressed, I think, particularly in matters relating to constitutional issues of this nature.

In that regard, Sir, absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is also said that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance and, therefore, comments today that I heard disturb me in the context of this particular debate. I hope that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter when he replies will withdraw the threat that is hanging over this Chamber that if it does not agree to the Report he will then draft up boundaries as Minister for Elections. We know that already and nobody needs to threaten this Chamber in that way.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, based on what you have said, let me correct you. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter did not say in this Chamber that he would do anything. The Right Honourable Member said according to the Constitution it would be left to him to do what was necessary and that is a difference in meaning altogether.

Sir, I would just try to put you straight on that, please. The Right Honourable Member did not make a threat in here that he would do anything.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, you can interpret it as you wish. We are all entitled to interpretation and I am not getting into any debate with the Chair. The Chair is entitled to its interpretation just as the media is entitled to theirs and we on this Side are entitled to ours and the public is

entitled to theirs. My interpretation and yours, Sir, do not coincide. That is all I am going to say on that, because at the end of the day what members in here are saying, and it was not said inside here but outside of here, that a warning needs to go out against those who would impress upon Parliamentarians not to support the Report, that at the end of the day it falls to the hands of the Minister by law and under the Constitution to draft the boundaries.

Sir, you may not interpret that as a warning, you may not interpret it as a threat, Sir, but I consider it to be an extreme and serious statement because at the end of the day it does not make sense setting up an independent and impartial Boundaries Commission and then diminishing the quality of its work by those kinds of statements.

In the book, 1994, by Winston Smith, a character said, having heard something said by somebody else, "Was it possible that they could swallow that?" At the end of the day the reply was, "Yes, they swallowed it."

I believe, Sir, that what we heard today from the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter does not have to be swallowed by the public of Barbados. They are entitled to repudiate it and say they do not accept the reasons given by the Right Honourable Member for supporting the Report of the Commission, that they believe that this is not an appropriate time to make changes to boundaries in Barbados, that they feel there are sufficient reasons both adduced by the Opposition and otherwise, by independent persons that would place in doubt the need to increase the number of seats in this country to 30, that there are concerns about the way the boundaries have been aligned and that those concerns could register negatively with the public in Barbados, that there is a cost attached to the changes and, as I said, at the end of the day this is not the appropriate time for us to be making those kinds of changes to the constituency boundaries in Barbados with an election less than 20 months away.

It is on that basis, Sir, that when the vote is called in relation to this particular Resolution that it will not be receiving my support.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, when the vote is called this Boundaries Commission Report will be receiving my support because I have great faith in independent commissions which are established to realign boundaries.
3.55 p.m.

Sir, I have been in the House a little longer than the Honourable Member for St. John. I think twice as long, and a bit more. I came into the House at a time, when I had witnessed the responsibility for redistricting or drafting boundaries, being in the hands of the politicians.

In 1966, when we had a debate concerning the Constitution of Barbados, the Barbados Labour Party took the very principled view that the issue of the constituency boundaries should be in the hands of an Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. It is well known, that if politicians of either party, or of any party have the sole responsibility for drawing districts, that that responsibility is one that can be used and has been used in many countries, for what is referred to as gerrymandering.

Sir, I would refer you to the classic cases of gerrymandering that take place in countries that are supposed to be the bastion of democracy. With your permission, Sir, I will read from the *Economist*, the well known paper that is published weekly in London, of April 27, to May 3, 2002 and I am reading from page 47.

"Congressional redistricting.
How to rig an election.
WASHINGTON, DC.

In a normal democracy, voters choose their representatives. In America, it is rapidly becoming the other way around.

Imagine a state with five congressional seats and only 25 voters in each. That makes 125 voters. Sixty-five are Republicans, 60 are Democrats. You might think a fair election in such a state would produce say, three Republican Representatives and two Democrats.

Now imagine you can draw the district boundaries anyway you like. The only condition is that you must keep 25 voters in each one. If you were Republican, you could carve up the state, so that there were 13 Republicans and 12 Democrats per district. Your party would win every seat narrowly. Republicans five-nil.

Now, imagine you were a Democrat. If you put 15 Republicans in one district, you could then divide the rest of the state, so that each district has 13 Democrats and 12 Republicans. Democrats four-one. Same state, same number of districts, same party affiliation: completely different results. All you need is the power to draw district lines. And that is what America provides: a process called redistricting, which, through back-room negotiations too boring for most voters to think about, can distort the democratic system. All countries, in the interest of equal representation, adjust their electoral boundaries to reflect population changes. Most democracies hand over this job to independent commissions, which content themselves with tinkering with existing boundaries. In America, in all but a few states, that idea sounds elitist and undemocratic. So every ten years, after the census, politicians in state legislatures meet to draw new voting maps which are approved by the state governor. Since America's

population is both faster-growing and more buying than that of the other old democracies, and since the Voting Rights Act actually requires minorities to have special "majority-minority districts" in order to get an equal chance to elect candidates of their choice (that is, their race) redistricters end up doing a lot more tinkering."

Sir, I cannot read the whole article because it would take up my speech, but let me say that the principled stand of the Barbados Labour Party as opposed to the Democratic Labour Party in the 30 years or more that I have been associated with politics, has been that we should have an Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. We fought that issue out in London and we lost.

The Secretary of State says that whenever there is a change of Government and you are still of the same mind, you will make that change and we had to wait for 15 years, almost, before we made that change.

I remember the debate in the House when the Democratic Labour Party took the view that it was no big thing. You did not need to put it in the hands of an independent commission. Leave it with the Minister and you saw redistricting in the worst form of gerrymandering.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John has admitted that he has confidence in the integrity of the Commission that now exists and you will see that all of us have, since the Independent Commission, expressed whenever the Reports have come to this House, confidence in their integrity. It is easy to see, Sir, this is what the *Economist* said about putting it into cleaner hands.

"So what, if anything, can be done? Some states already use alternative systems that could be copied. Iowa lets civil servants draw new lines without reference to incumbents or regional voting patterns (rather as in Europe). Five other states hand redistricting authority over to bipartisan commissions, sometimes with a neutral tie-breaker approved by both parties.

Neither system works perfectly. But either would be better than the existing one. Both would limit partisan gerrymandering by removing debates about redistricting from legislatures, leaving them free to get on undistracted with their proper business, such as crafting budgets. Best of all, they do seem to work quite well."

Sir, that is a comment from the *Economist* magazine.

I am well satisfied, Sir, that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission which came in with an amendment, I think in 1981, to the Constitution, has worked quite well in Barbados. No one is saying that it has worked perfectly.

There is no redistricting done by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission that has pleased all of us.

I have faced some seven elections, Sir, and my constituency has changed from what it was in 1971 to what it is today. And today, more changes are proposed to it. I, like the Honourable Member who has just spoken, and like other Honourable Members, and like the Right Honourable Prime Minister felt that you should keep as close as possible to the old parochial boundaries. They are redrafted, redrawing my constituency now in such a way that areas like Lynch Gap and Brathwaites Gap and Gun Site Road comes back into the parish boundary.

Sir, that comes nearer to the point. It does not mean that you do not have a division of communities with parish boundaries, because, believe me, Sir, the parish boundary in Christ Church divides up the Dayrells Road community and it has always divided up the upper Brittons Hill community. You cannot avoid it completely, but wherever possible, I support the principle as well of respecting parish boundaries and of respecting communities that hold together.

For example, the area of St. Patricks was divided largely between two constituencies: the constituency of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and the constituency of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central. They are now putting it all in one constituency. I say, Sir, to the disadvantage of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central. That is not in favour, necessarily of the Barbados Labour Party. I would not want to fault the Commission and say that was a deliberate act or some act on their part of gerrymandering because this Report does not have any signs of gerrymandering in it.
4.05 p.m.

I believe that the Commission has tried to do its best based on the basic information made available to them by their independent staff, I think they are members of the Civil Service, who went out there, looked at all the statistics and tried wherever possible to work within the very broad guidelines set out in the Constitution.

Sir, I do not think the Honourable Member for St. John made much point of this and I do not think there is much for him to decry in this Report in relation to the redrafting of boundaries. When there are decisions to be made in Barbados, you could make them in Parliament or you could allow your Commissions to guide you.

Sir, no one with any certainty can say what is the right number of representatives to have in any country. There are those who said that we had 24 members for many years, so

we should hold to the 24 members. Those of us who believe in fairness in elections and having an equality and balance in the weight of votes felt that the best way to do this is to have, as near as possible, constituencies with equal numbers, varying 10 per cent up or 10 per cent down. Sir, that was the formula we had.

The Commission found that it had to report to us that that formula meant that there were some constituencies that were way below that 10 per cent and some were way above that 10 per cent. The result was then that those constituencies which were way below the 10 per cent, that the votes of those electors counted more in the election of a member than those who had it way above or those who were equal in the middle. That is the reason that I see from this Report; that working within the constitutional framework set out for it and conforming with the Constitution of Barbados, the Commission has recommended that there be a change in the boundaries in such a way that you would have equal districts, that is why they have recommended two more seats. But the Commission has done more than that.

The Commission has also recommended that the Constitution be changed so that the formula can have a difference of 15 per cent up or down. Sir, if it gets beyond 15 per cent and I am still in this House I will find difficulty in going further than the 15 per cent because I think 15 per cent is even too high. I believe it is necessary to have an equal balance in the weight of votes.

Mr. Speaker, some persons would answer this question by proportional representation. As a person who studied political science, I do not think proportional representation provides the full answer. It is only part of the answer in the same way as what is being done here is only part of the answer but we can find no perfect system.

I believe the Honourable Member for St. John would agree with me that when all is said and done, Barbados has had a better electoral system since we have had the Electoral and Boundaries Commission and that since we brought in the Representation of the People Act in 1951 to give adult suffrage we have had more democracy in this country and a fairer system than at any other time.

Sir, that does not mean that the political parties do not disagree and it does not mean that politicians do not make political points. The Honourable Member for St. John is making a political point because he may feel that the electorate believes that if... They do not like politicians in some respects but they cannot do without us. We are the whipping boys of every calypsonian, every newspaper man and the public. I must have chosen two of the worst professions in life, that is, to be a politician and a lawyer. You are beaten every day.

Having said all that, the same people who would put verbal blows on us recognise that this country could not have made the progress it has made in the last 50 to 60 years without the political parties that it has today and what they have done, but sometimes we shortchange ourselves.

One of the reasons people are suspicious of us, is that the system of democracy allows many different opinions to flourish and the nearer you come to an election you would hear views expressed that sometimes in retrospect, politicians would prefer that they did not have to express. Obviously an Opposition wants to be in government, so the Opposition may think that it needs longer time for preparation. On the other hand, a government wants to remain in government and may think it does not need a long time for preparation. So the divide between us here is not about the number of seats.

I do not know whom a Dr. Estwick belongs to, but I understand that he has already chosen St. Philip West and I do not believe that the Leader of the Opposition would have allowed him to advertise himself in that way without putting some blows on him. Sir, if the newspapers are to be believed, a Mr. Stephenson has already looked at St. James Central. So when I hear the Honourable Member for St. John saying that he did not know anything about the Report in this way and what not, I know that the Democratic Labour Party candidates already knew the districts they were hoping the Commission would finally decide on and people have positioned themselves in them.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Sir, that is where the problem comes. Sir, I joined the Barbados Labour Party in February 1971. I was asked to run for the party some time in March 1971. At that time, I understood that I would be running in St. Michael South Central, so I started canvassing the constituency which was eventually won by the Honourable Sir Frederick Smith. In the midst of my canvassing, my political party directed me to go to Christ Church West. I did not like it. I had between April or May and September to win an election; but I won.
4.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am not the only one. The Honourable Evelyn Greaves returned to Barbados and, within a few weeks, won in the constituency of St. Lucy.

Sir, I do not believe that in a small island such as this there is any magic about timing. For instance, my constituency is now having an additional thousand voters added to it. I do not believe it is going to take me too long to canvass. That is the position, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if there is any magic that the Honourable Member wants for two years.

The Honourable Member, as Leader of the Opposition since 1994, knows Barbados well. Most of the people who are going to run for the DLP know or ought to know where they want to run. Does anyone believe they need two years to campaign? With all due respect to the Honourable Member, I believe this to be a political shot in the hope that persons out there who do not like us politicians too much say that we have added two new seats and have not given the people time in which to prepare themselves. I do not believe it is a strong argument at all because some of us have had to face elections in shorter times. I certainly have seen the DLP make changes and have called elections within six to nine months. I do not believe it is a grave disadvantage that will affect democracy.

Sir, the cost of two additional seats to the country is approximately \$200,000, and with the size of the budget which we have is not a lot of money. I have been in politics long enough and have had the opportunity to look back and see that Barbados does not spend a lot of money on its politicians or on maintaining a democracy.

Sir, let me say to the benefit of Barbados, we do not have a local government in this country. When people compare us to Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent, Antigua or Dominica, those countries pay, not only their main politicians but they also have a local government system. If I leave Barbados and go to Canada, the Canadian Parliament has under it a federal parliament, parliaments in each province. In each province there is a system of local government. In each province there is a system of district government. Therefore, they are even more of a government that we in Barbados could ever imagine. Therefore, it is nonsense for people to be putting an argument that in the United Kingdom, a constituency could be 60,000 and so what is being said in Barbados, being 10,000 is not too much. Those 60,000 in the United Kingdom have the benefit of local governance and followers that we have not.

Sir, I have said in this Parliament – and some people may take it as a joke – but at 3 o'clock in the morning, you and the wife looking at each other in a certain way, the telephone rings, and a constituent telling you to come to them immediately because of a problem being experienced. There is no local governance to go for that.

In my constituency, I have had to walk in flood waters that reached to my waist. I have never seen anybody in the United Kingdom ever going to help rescue people that were caught in a flood. When I was Minister of External Affairs, I have had to leave the Ministry at Marine House and go into 4th Avenue, Harts Gap, in order to have a dead dog removed. Therefore, I do not believe it is right for persons not to compare the nature of the representation and the things required of the representation in here and mistakenly give the public the view that we are in public life to rip them off.

Sir, let me say this. I have spent more on: burying people, marrying people, paying for sick people, sending students to schools, buying uniforms, helping community groups, than I have spent on my family. If I look back at the amount of money that I have spent over those 31 years, from my own pocket, not only from Parliament, in helping the community or in helping persons who are more in need, if I were a selfish person or did not have an interest in the community, I might have said that I have wasted my time or my money on the community.

I believe, as a Christian, that I have been blessed and have been able to help people. Therefore, it hurts me when people try to belittle the role that those of us who have sacrificed our time and our families and have given to public life. It hurts more when politicians do it among ourselves. I say to some of the critics: come out and face the music. I do not believe that our role is properly understood. I hope, therefore, that the Leader of the Opposition, as the political Party, would cease taking these matters and would make the public understand what is proper civil governance.

Sir, there is much we can do towards reforming our electoral system. There is much that we can do towards improving our democracy. I agree with the Honourable Member when he said we could do a lot more with the Electoral and Boundaries Commission in reforming the Constitution. I do not accept his view, however, that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission has not done some of the things he said that ought to have been done.

I know for a fact they have looked very carefully at the layout of the areas and have taken into account the issues of communities and trying to keep communities together. I know that they looked at natural courses so as not to divide areas or streets. I believe they have consulted much more than appear to the public, not only to the politicians who were affected by these changes but by communities themselves.

If the Honourable Member wishes this to be put in black and white as some of the rules to guide the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, then we could do that because both political parties can agree on it.

Let me say, however, there is one point on which I would agree with him in advising the Electoral and Boundaries Commission to follow in the future. That is to have a public hearing. They need not hide their good work under a bushel. They could have a public hearing in some of these areas, except I would have to counsel some of these parties not to use the Electoral and Boundaries Commission for partisan reasons. There will always be some persons who will talk foolishness, while there will be some who will talk sense. Sometimes it is those who talk the foolishness who get the publicity and, in the long run, could do more damage.

I think the Government, the Opposition and the whole country, should look at ways how we could improve our Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Sir, it is an independent body and we should do everything to strengthen its independence and to make it more responsible, although I have seen no sign of irresponsibility in either this Commission or the preceding one.

Sir, there is another area in which our electoral system could be improved. One that is sadly missing is campaign finance. The Representation of the People Act has been amended to allow Members of Parliament to spend \$10 per electorate. Sir, the rules are still being side-stepped because there is no legislation governing political parties. These parties can spend their monies in any way for an election.

Sir, a campaign is a very tough one for representatives and you would know that, Sir. That is the time when people believe they can make money out of politicians. I have seen creeping into political life, where even your party supporters want to be paid on election days and otherwise, just as election officials are being paid. Politicians are the ones that give but not all the time. I believe if people are truly interested in democracy and in political parties, then expecting to be paid in order to help organise an election or to win an election is a wrong trend. I have said it to people in my constituency and I will continue to say it in public more and more. It is a wrong trend and those are the sorts of things that I hope to hear the public discuss.
4.25 p.m.

Sir, I also believe that we have reached the stage where we do not need any person from outside to come here to tell us how to run our elections. We should make the public understand, as has been done in Canada, Sweden and Finland, that political parties are necessarily to maintain democracy. Therefore, people have to help finance those political parties if they are serious parties in political campaigns.

I call for the Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party to get together and consult widely with the public in order to reform the laws so that instead of people from outside having to give money to political parties to run elections that the public pays, accounts are audited, and then the public will know that people cannot put pressure on Government or political parties afterwards in order to get an advantage. The newspapers, media and commentators should be paying attention to how we can reform our laws in order to have a pure system of democracy.

Sir, I feel strongly on this issue of campaign financing because I have known people in both political parties who are unable to pay for their campaign. Sir, I object to this so-

called pay back time. I will write letters for my constituents, try to get them housing, improve roads and whatever else needs to be done but this feeling that if you get into office and you cannot provide a job or house for everybody, you have done nothing, you are no good and they will not vote for you is wrong; if there is an increase of crime in the country, it is the fault of the Attorney General or the Government but people are breaking the law and bringing guns and nobody whips the public for that.

Sir, I could whip the public because I always tell the public if they do not want to vote for me, do not vote for me. We have to tell our communities to live within the law, cooperate and raise our standards because that is the only way to preserve our freedom and strengthen democracy.

Sir, we would never have got this far if political parties had not been started. Sir, this political party to which I belong is the oldest surviving political party in the English-speaking Caribbean. This party is well over 65 years and the Democratic Labour Party is now in its 56th year. Where would Barbados and particularly people of a certain colour be today if political parties had not been formed?

Sir, I have led a party in Opposition decimated to only three members. There were times when we could not pay the maid at the end of the week. We were fortunate that a few of us were able to pull our pockets from time to time to make the political party survive. The same would have happened with the Democratic Labour Party at some time. Sir, is that in the interest of democracy? We took the view that from the late Tom Adams right down, that political parties should be provided with some assistance, for which they must account to the public in order to strengthen political parties. This view was accepted by the Commission set up in 1998 but it has not yet been implemented.

We have to sell it to the public of Barbados that it is in their interest that political parties are properly run and organised. Sir, I do not know of any political party that can be run and organised without having adequate resources. I prefer those resources to come from the public than to come from a private company who can afterwards tell me they want a tendering contract for a particular building and instead of the money being used for the public it goes to somebody to make extraordinary profits.

Sir, maybe I am a dreamer but I look forward to this happening soon. I also believe we should strengthen the representative chosen and that we should also consult more with the public.

Sir, I hope another opportunity will come for me to speak on how we can reform our electoral system and our democracy. I feel that my time in Parliament has given me the liberty to speak as frankly as I have spoken today to

the public of Barbados to say to them that we can look at the short term of this matter and make fun at the politicians or believe that the politicians are there only to get money. Barbados is one of the societies in which all politicians have been like politicians from developed countries where you can talk of them dying and having ripped off the public.
4.35 p.m.

We have had a reasonably pure system. There have been mistakes and there are some examples. I believe that the public owes it to themselves, not to us, to try and strengthen their political system. It is a cost that must be monitored but it is cost that is not too heavy to pay for the price of democracy and the price of freedom.

I strongly love this country and believe in it. I believe that people have enough common sense to cut through the wool of partisan political binding and get to the substance of trying to strengthen our democratic institution.

As the Honourable Member said earlier, we always boast that we are the best of everything. I believe that all people deserve the best, have the ability to achieve the best and that they want the best. That is one of the reasons why I can support this Report, Sir.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, St. Philip is one of the parishes most seriously affected by the proposed boundary change. Therefore, I think that I have a duty to make a very brief contribution to this particular debate.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, during the contribution of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, he made a statement in which he said that nobody can say with certainty how many seats we should have. It is there that I would want to begin my short presentation.

I was checking the history of this particular initiative, when I realised that in 1961 there were 24 seats and 24 seats in Barbados at that time where 11 parishes had two seats each, and there were also two seats in the City of Bridgetown. If I remember correctly, those two seats in the City were held by Mr. Louis Lynch and Mr. E. D. Mottley.

Mr. Speaker, today the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is proposing 30 seats in the year 2002. If we look at it, we are moving to an additional six seats in 41 years.

I believe that if we check on the number of constituents per representative throughout the Eastern Caribbean, we will see that Barbados has one of the highest ratios, if not the highest. The Honourable Member for St. Peter drew the example of Bermuda. I do not think what we are doing

should cause any public outcry or even an outcry from the Opposition with respect to this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1960s St. Michael had over 40 000 registered voters and places like St. Andrew had 3 000 registered voters. Yet, those two parishes had two representatives each. That is why St. Michael had to move to small manageable single-member constituencies. The point I want to make is, I believe that whenever there is glaring disequilibrium in the constituencies, it should be corrected. I speak as the representative for St. Philip North and I know what I am talking about. I know how it has restricted me as a representative in St. Philip North. Sir, the demographics have changed significantly in the parish of St. Philip. We have as many people who have migrated to St. Philip as those who are genuine bred and born "Phillipians", and you would know what I am speaking about, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: The Honourable Member for St. John is one of those people who has migrated to the constituency of St. Philip.

Sir, if you look at places such as Ruby Park, Crane, Long Bay Development, Union, Mangrove, Sanford, Harmony Hall, Castle Heights and Inchcape, you would understand what I speaking about. When I first canvassed in 1994, there was an area called Windward Gardens, I only had to knock on three doors because there were only three houses in Windward Gardens. If you walk through Windward Gardens now, you have to knock on almost 100 doors, and that is the nature of how housing has been changing in St. Philip North.

Mr. Speaker, there is an area in my constituency called Breezy Hill. When I walked through Breezy Hill in 1994, there were no houses there, now there are approximately 150 houses; and that is what has been happening in the parish of St. Philip.

St. Philip, to my mind, is the parish that has expanded most in Barbados. The geographical area which I now represent is one of the largest in Barbados. From the most eastern end of St. Philip North, East Point, Bayfield down to Ebenezer, Moncrief and Brereton. They might be certain representatives who might be able walk around their constituencies in 45 minutes but I cannot do that because of the geography of the area that I represent.

I must say that in every society you must ensure that every individual is properly represented. You cannot have a situation where one representative is representing 10 000 constituents and another representative is representing 5 000 with the same resources being given to those representatives. That is the point that I want to make and I want to make it very strongly. I know people would say that you do

not visit certain areas but because of the large size of the constituency I am certainly happy and comfortable with the idea of having a third constituency in the parish of St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat I want to say that there is a civil war going on in the Democratic Labour Party and they must not bring St. Philip into their tribalism. It hurts me when I hear that there should not be another seat in St. Philip, when I know that it is only because of the domestic violence that is going on in the Democratic Labour Party that we are having that particular argument. I do not think that they have any philosophical position when it comes to being opposed to the third seat in St. Philip. I know exactly what is causing it, Mr. Speaker, and I will tell you in a moment what has caused them to hold this particular position on the third seat in St. Philip.

I knew of a time when the third seat was mentioned, when everybody in the Democratic Labour Party was happy about it and that includes the two or four leaders that they have. Sir, they felt that third seat in St. Philip was going to be very favourable to the Democratic Labour Party. As the Honourable Member for St. John said in here today, there were areas in St. Philip West, Sunbury, Brereton, Marchfield and Ebenezer that were usually very loyal to the Democratic Labour Party but a lot of that support has eroded now.

Mr. Speaker, the negative vibes that we are getting today only started to emanate from the Democratic Labour Party's top-brass after a "friend by name and a friend by nature" expressed an interest in that proposed seat and every effort was made to keep him out of that particular seat. A candidate was put in place very early in St. Philip West to keep him out. I know of that which I speak. As the Honourable Member for Christ Church West has said, we are not fools in here, Mr. Speaker, do not tell us that you are not in favour of an additional seat in St. Philip West and then you have a candidate in place even before the Barbados Labour Party could think about putting a candidate in place for St. Philip West. Yet they are saying they are not in favour.

4.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, they agreed in principle to the whole question of having this third seat. Once a "friend by name and a friend by nature" was the person who was going to benefit from this extra seat in St. Philip, they began to back-pedal and they are now back-peddalling so fast that they are beginning to speed wobble. That is the position. This is the point, that "friend by name and friend by nature" has now completely out-thought, outsmarted, outwitted, outfoxed and completely outmanoeuvred the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party. They should admit that they are now no match for him at all. He seems to be telling them, "You all can stand up there in St. Philip West and you all can argue. I am

doing like Winston Hall. When you are looking for me in one place I will be gone another." He has outfoxed them.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you have heard of the expression in terms of a woman giving a man a big rock to hold. That is exactly what is happening here. A "friend by name and a friend by nature" has actually given them a big rock to hold. Now they would be glad to say they agree with the third seat but being so bitter in the past when it looked as though he was going to be the person who had an interest in the seat they would look stupid now if they changed their position.

I know how it all started, Mr. Speaker. If this same "friend by name and this same friend by nature" is endorsed anywhere in Barbados, whether it be St. Michael South or wherever, before that Annual Conference, the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party will change once again. I know of that which I speak.

Mr. Speaker, only a very stupid government with a 26 to 2 majority and with an Opposition in utter shambles would go tampering with its 26 seats. What we are actually doing here is because the Electoral and Boundaries Commission has recommended it and the law requires it. It is a legal thing that we are doing. Some of our own members, let me admit up front have said they would not mind having the 28 seats as they are now but they would respect the will of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission. That has been our position. Too many constituencies were at variance with the Constitution and we believe now that all 30 seats will be within the prescription of the Constitution and they will be winnable.

Mr. Speaker, I personally have no problem whatsoever in supporting the Report and the recommendation of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission and it has my complete support. I am grateful to you, Sir.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to start where the Honourable Member for St. Phillip North ended and I want to correct the Honourable Member when he made the point that if "a friend by name and a friend by nature" is selected before the annual conference this year that it would change the political leadership of the Democratic Labour Party. I would like to tell the Honourable Member that, unlike his Party, the Democratic Labour Party is governed by a constitution and at section 50 the constitution speaks to the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party. No little side talk would give the impression that a "friend by name and a friend by nature" would be about to break up the Democratic Labour Party.

I also want to correct another myth that has been placed in the public of Barbados' mind and that is I saw in a newspaper Report where the Honourable Member for

St. Michael North East gave the impression that the Democratic Labour Party supported 30 seats. I want to deny categorically that the Democratic Labour Party took a decision to support 30 seats and any wording by anybody cannot tie the Democratic Labour Party to 30 seats. The only position taken by the Democratic Labour Party was on May 22, a Wednesday night, and that position was not to support the 30 seats. Being the ambassador for the Democratic Labour Party, I can only put that position on behalf of the Party. So any newspaper Reports claiming that the Democratic Labour Party spoke to increase the seats to 30, I want to deny categorically on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party and I hope the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East would not repeat that particular point, giving the impression that the 30 seats were supported by the Democratic Labour Party. I want that to be very clear, Sir.

I also want to thank the people of St. Lucy for allowing me this opportunity to speak. It is rather interesting that coming out of this Report, Sir, the constituency of St. Lucy will now be 7 810 voters which not only makes it the only female constituency in Barbados but it makes it the largest constituency in Barbados. I want to make the point that it is the largest constituency not only by size but by numbers. No one can deny these facts.

Sir, I do not know of any area in my constituency at this point in time that I would like to give up. I believe in everyone of my constituents whether they vote for me or whether they do not. I do not know of anybody that I want to give up from that constituency. With that as a base, Sir, I am saying it is the only female constituency in Barbados and I think the best system that one could have used in arriving at the right number of seats in Barbados would have been to use St. Lucy as the mean to come to a conclusion and the right number of seats using the total number of voters within St. Lucy. If they had done that, they could not make an error because it could easily work out to 27.

I understand now why 27 was not the number because one person figured that there was a possibility that somebody might do foolishness and there might be an independent. I also want to put a lie to that. As far as I know, Sir, I have no reason to believe that what was said is true. As far as I know, it has already been declared that I am the candidate for the Democratic Labour Party in St. Lucy and it appears to me that there are members who understand differently. As far as I know, my branch has not chosen anyone outside of myself and if there is knowledge among other members of the House that people want to get rid of me, that is up to them. One thing that has been ratified is come next elections Dennis St. Elmo Kellman will be a candidate. Being the strongest advocate for my Party I have no reason to believe that my Party would not want me to be a candidate. I have no reason to believe what I heard in here today, Sir.

I have heard today there was a suggestion to cut the eastern part from the constituency that has allowed me the

privilege to speak on its behalf, and I want to make the point that fortunately for me I can easily be considered that politician who represented St. Lucy as an East/West politician and a North/South politician. All those who made the suggestion, I thank them for making it but it has allowed me to put a little more concentration on the western side of my border. So I hope, Sir, that I put a lie to all of these things.

We must understand also, Sir, that we cannot continue to believe that local government is the answer to everything. What we need is not necessarily local government but a policy in place to make sure that every constituency in Barbados is given a part of the cake. I am saying that at every Estimates in this Parliament there should be an allocation for constituencies. For example, if you are spending \$60 million in roads, the constituency of St. Lucy should know how much money will be spent on the roads for it. If you adopted that policy you would not get the wrangling any longer about whether you need local government or the normal government. Give that authority to the civil servants and stop putting too much of that power in the politicians' hands because once you get fairness there will be no need to call for local government.

I have been insisting on this for many years and up to now this Parliament has not seen the common sense in this particular argument but I hope, Sir, that the public of Barbados would recognise the commonsense in this argument and we will not any longer after the next election have a situation where one constituency can get \$22 million out of \$60 million and the other cannot get any. Sir, just do a ratio per constituency! If it means that I am going to get \$300 000 for the year when it comes to Estimates I will know that and I would be able to take that to my constituency. I do not believe in coming here and voting for \$60 million for roads and I do not know how much of that will be spent on my constituency.

5.00 p.m.

Sir, I am saying that we do not need local Government, what we need in this country is fairness and once we get fairness, we will not have this quarrel among constituents talking about another tier of Government. There are many services that you can look at from that point of view. There are many things that we can allocate. I will say this, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South has tried it and I have watched it and there are a couple more Ministers trying to implement it, but the truth is there need to take it a step further. They need to bring it here at Estimates time and let us deal with it then, so that when we deal with it at Estimates, we will be able to tell each parliamentarian how much money will be spent in a particular constituency.

So I am saying, Sir, that the Democratic Labour Party cannot be tied to this Report. There is no evidence that the

Democratic Labour Party has given its voice to allow this Report to be prepared. I challenge anybody to tell me how the Democratic Labour Party can be tied to this Report, by any suggestion coming out of its members to get this Report completed. Those who go about saying that the Democratic Labour Party has agreed to something and back away, I am saying that it cannot be true and it cannot be heard in Barbados or elsewhere that the Democratic Labour Party did anything to complete this document. Once you look and listen to the speeches in here today, you would understand, Sir, it was done in a private domain and I do not want anybody accusing that great party, the Democratic Labour Party, of giving a commitment and then breaking that commitment, because that is not the way we operate.

Sir, from the formation of the Democratic Labour Party, we have always made promises and we have kept our promises, and anybody who believes that they can walk around and give the impression that the Democratic Labour Party are the ones who would give their word and then turn away from it, that is not the Democratic Labour Party I know of, and if it could be proved, I would not want to be party to that. I know it cannot be so and I will always want to be part of the Democratic Labour Party.

If anybody can show me in the Press or any other place, where the Democratic Labour Party has agreed to this Report, then somebody would have to tell me why I was misled.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Not the Democratic Labour Party. The Democratic Labour Party had one meeting on this particular issue and a vote was taken by the Democratic Labour Party about this Report and the Democratic Labour Party rejected this Report. I am saying that I am standing by the position taken by the Democratic Labour Party on this Report and that is why I cannot vote for it, because I have been mandated by my party at that meeting not to vote for this Report.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Member for St. Lucy please indicate when that meeting took place?

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, as you know, Sir, I am not bound by this House to reply to that question. As stated previously, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was in her place, she would have known that I stated the date and time that that meeting of the Democratic Labour Party took place.

Sir, I am saying if we had done the things that we should have done, we could have easily had 27 constituencies, 23 of the size of 7 958 and four constituencies of the size of 7 959.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I cannot answer those questions. That is not part of this debate. I am saying that the Democratic Labour Party had no part of this and they voted against it at the meeting because it has nothing to do with the Democratic Labour Party. I have been given a mandate not to support this and I am going by my party on this particular issue.

I am also saying, Sir, that we have to understand that a great political party like the Democratic Labour Party must be able to take this Report now, even though we do not support it, and make sure that we put the right machinery in place that even though people set about to make it a negative prose, we must be able to give this to the person who has the best ability to articulate this and use it in the interest of the Democratic Labour Party. We must make sure, as a mass-based party, as we have always been, Sir, that we utilise the facilities to use this Report in the interest of the Democratic Labour Party to deliver the goods to the people of Barbados and to show them why we cannot support this Report. No one can question the Democratic Labour Party on this position. As I said before, the Democratic Labour Party made a mandate that it cannot be supported, and I will not support it.

Sir, I said before that St. Lucy should have been used as the base. I now have 7 810 constituents in St. Lucy of which I am proud. I do not want to drop one of them, and based on the growth pattern of Barbados, I can also see this number increasing, and when it increases, I want all of them. I not only have a situation where I have the greatest number of constituents with whom I have no problem, but also when you look at it from the landmass, it also has to be Number One again. So you can see, Sir, that makes me the Number One MP in many ways and I can bring the statistics to prove that I am the Number One MP now in this House of Assembly, based on numbers, land area and many other things.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am not quarrelling about the numbers I have, neither do I have a quarrel with the female constituency of which I represent. Neither am I complaining that the landmass is too great for me to canvass either. I have them and I think it would be good to use it as the base to allocate the other constituencies by numbers. I believe if you do that, Sir, you might be able to get 27 or 26 and I could understand why the Democratic Labour Party, probably looking at St. Lucy as the base, was able to come to the conclusion it came to at its meeting.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, this debate in many ways speaks to a number of different issues. One of

the most fundamental aspects of the debate is in respect of the history of credibility, and I want at the outset, to spend some time speaking to that issue and assuring you that if ever there was a repudiation of the leadership of a political leader in respect of a process that is provided for in the Constitution, supplemented by it, is the version of what has transpired over the last three years in respect of the consultative process from the Electoral and Boundaries Commission Representatives and clearly members of the Democratic Labour Party as adumbrated just now by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

5.10 p.m.

It is a fact that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said that the first time he was aware of any changes or the nature of the changes as recommended by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission Report was at a meeting held on May 22, 2002 and that he received first-hand knowledge then of what was presented in the document which was laid in this Parliament at the beginning of this month.

Sir, the Constitution of Barbados at section 41D provides that a Report shall be made no less than two years or no more than five years from the submission of the last Report. The last Report was submitted to the Prime Minister's Office to the Prime Minister as Minister for Electoral Affairs in November 1998. In 1999, a legal opinion was received indicating that after the general election in January 1999 was held on the old boundaries, because this party did not feel that it was reasonable to change boundaries and call an election right away, that there should be a reasonable period between the receipt of the Report and the changing of the boundaries. Since that time in 1999 when the legal opinion rendered the 1998 Report void, there has been a process facilitated by the chief electoral officer and the members of his department so as to put the members of the Commission in a position to be able to comply with the terms of section 41D of the Constitution.

Sir, the structure of that Commission was made up of three members nominated by the Barbados Labour Party, Mr. Philip Serrao, Chairman, Mr. Hal Gollop and Miss Kim Thompson. The Deputy Chairman of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is nominated by the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House because as far as I know the Constitution of Barbados does not allow a political party to nominate members to a commission. As far as I know, that position is reserved to the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is getting up only to say that the Leader of the Opposition, as he has done since then, continues to

nominate persons without consulting with members of his party and he knows what I am speaking about. The Deputy Chairman of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is nominated by the Leader of the Opposition who holds the capacity also as the person in charge of the affairs of the Democratic Labour Party in this House and only in this House since his confession of incompetence. Mr. Speaker, the second member on that Commission similarly nominated by the Leader of the Opposition is Miss Traece Codrington.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would have you believe by his statement that he belongs to a political party that has allowed no consultations to take place. What is more, while his political party is countenancing the proposed nominations for someone in St. Philip West in the name of a doctor and the proposed nominations for St. James Central which may end up having either a cricketer or the rejected person from St. Philip West that all the time when his party is doing that they had no knowledge of what was taking place and what was being recommended by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it is either that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is speaking the truth in which case it is a total repudiation of the leadership of the Honourable Member for St. John or it is that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has not given us all the facts.

Mr. Speaker, I must confess to you that when the Honourable Member for St. Lucy received his Report on the day on which it was laid in here a couple weeks ago, he greeted the Report with such surprise that I truly believe that he saw it for the first time and saw the details of it for the first time when he opened it in this Chamber. I, therefore, have every reason to believe that that can amount to no more than a repudiation of the leadership of the Honourable Member for St. John.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that there is a sad state of affairs that has found itself within the Democratic Labour Party. I would really have wished that we would have been proceeding in this debate on the basis of the most mature considerations not only of the unanimous Report. All five members of the Commission have signed this Report as being theirs at page 8. I would have hoped that we would have proceeded with not only a more mature consideration of the issues but also begin to start the process of dialogue for further reform of our electoral system and the system of our Parliament.

I say so, Sir, cognisant that we have reached the stage 36 years after Independence fully appreciating that the exercise of our citizens rights to democracy cannot be reduced to voting at the polls once every five years and that there has to be a system of accommodation that allows the citizens of this country fully to participate in the process of democracy in all of its various facets from political rights to economic rights to social rights. I believe that there are

certain fundamental issues that as two mature political parties we should have been able to engage in, in this debate today, carrying forward the interest of the overall population of this country rather than at this stage wondering who consulted who in the Democratic Labour Party or who agreed or did not agree because they did not know and who in truth has the right to determine what the party's policy should be since we are not sure which leader is the preeminent leader whether it is the Leader of the Opposition, the leader in the Senate or the one person who has said that he has remained faithful to the Democratic Labour Party, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. This is what we are reduced to today.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West raised fundamental points in relation to the funding of political campaigns and the extent to which we are prepared to preserve elements of our democracy in recognition of the fact that there is no other institution on the landscape of this country that has done more to transform this country and the individual circumstances of the citizens of this country or political institutions of this country whether those now living or those defunct.

We have had a unique opportunity to be the beneficiary of fundamental changes in the circumstances in which we live, in the circumstances of our economic opportunities, in respect of access to basic social rights, education, health care, subsidised transportation, social security benefits *et cetera* and in circumstances where other people similarly positioned as we were in 1930 or 1935 have had to shed blood to even get to half of where we have gotten.
5.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that in every system there are problems but the way to deal with those problems is not to castigate the system itself but to deal with those individuals in the system who fail to be accountable. We have a problem in respect of apathy, as well as cynicism on the part of the populace of this country. Some may argue that those are signs that come with the aging of a democracy. If one looks at the developed world, one will see that most of the elections in the developed world do not ever reach 40 per cent turnout, while we are still hovering between 62 to 64 per cent, which is relatively lower than the 75 or 80 per cent that we have had in the past.

Sir, I believe that we have seriously to place some issues before the public for mature discussion, that is why I am so surprised at the state of the DLP today. They have a role to play and the public does not expect any of us to play political football with these serious issues. We have to determine how best we can guarantee the rights of persons to participate in a process that does not allow them to be beholden to any single economic or otherwise interest in this country. Part of the difficulty is that the financing of a political party is a tenuous exercise and we must recognise

that there is a cost to the preservation of democracy. I believe that is a cost to which we should be committed in respect of providing. We cannot pay for the stability we have had over the last 70 years in this country. A large reason for that stability has come as a result of the contributions of political parties in the governance of this country.

Mr. Speaker, there must be serious dialogue on both the issue of campaign and that of political party financing because political parties have to exist in between elections and not just during campaigns. This House has already gone, in some way, in recognition of that, in providing a limited support to the political parties that are represented in the House.

There are greater demands to both political parties, as well as to Members of Parliaments in the early 21st Century, in respect of the range of issues, the complexity of issues, and the nature of time that is required to master them. This country is, at the same time, involved in negotiations in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). We are, at the same time, trying to bring resolution in the establishment of a CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). At the same time we are in negotiation with the World Trade Organisation (WTO). We are, as well, negotiating a new relationship with Europe to be a successor, particularly in the Lomé Agreement. Sir, all of these require, not just for the Honourable Member of the City to have a percentage, or for the public servants in her Ministry but also requires political parties to have the capacity to do the research, to analyse the issues, and to inform the development of policies within the Party. At the same time, we have to speak to certain local issues because of the absence of local government in this country. Therefore, the range of issues that confront a single Member of Parliament in a political institution, are both diverse and complex.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we have not yet reached the point of providing appropriate support services in terms of research, in the ability to service the needs that are required of us as individuals and as a political party.

I also believe we need to educate the Barbadian public about the facts of other jurisdictions. The Right Honourable Prime Minister referred to the fact that Bermuda now has 40 seats and will move to 32 seats after the next election. Bermuda also has local government. It has in excess of 108 statutory boards. It has a population of 60,000 and a land size of 22 square miles. Bahamas, on the other hand, has a population of 280,000, 32 seats and a system of local government.

Mr. Speaker, from 1981 the electorate in this country has moved from 154,676 voters to 214,870 to January, 2002, an increase of 50,194 voters. In 20 years' time the electorate has grown by 50,194 and there has only been an increase of

Sir, if we were to meet the demand of maintaining at the size that it was, then out of necessity there has to be an increase in the numbers of constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, it does not require a Solomon to know where the housing growth in Barbados has taken place. Every one knows that St. Philip and St. James have grown at a pace that has been phenomenal in the last ten years. The application for development and project proposals show that they will continue to grow at a phenomenal rate. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have to position ourselves in such a way that we can effectively meet the increase without having to be changing boundaries every five years.

Indeed, I understand the recommendations to the variation to the Third Schedule. By changing from a 10 per cent to a 15 per cent variable could mean that there is a desire for a level of certainty in respect to the changes which this Report recommends to the boundaries of our constituencies. Mr. Speaker, we should hopefully try to be in a position where these changes can last for at least 15 years.

Sir, if we were to do what the President of the DLP, the gentleman from the Other Place has suggested, that we should simply realign the boundaries, then every single constituency of the 28 would change its character and boundary by more than half of the constituency because of the increase in levels to which I have just referred, an increase of over 50 000 registered voters in twenty years.
5.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I view the Opposition Labour Party as nothing more than an inability for any one Leader of the Democratic Labour Party to have his say and to bring along the rest, because their words do not match their actions. They are preparing to nominate people in St. Philip West and in St. James Central. Sir, that is a fact and they cannot deny it. The only way you can nominate people in St. Philip West and in St. James Central is if you accept that there will be an increase from 28 seats to 30 seats.

Sir, their behaviour which does not reflect consistency nor transparency as a party only serves to reinforce the public's cynicism about politicians and I have a difficulty with that. I believe that the profession of which all of us belong is one in which we have come to serve the interest of the public. I believe that we have a responsibility to engage in serious, mature, political discussion so that we can build on the gains that were so hard fought for by our predecessors, recognising that we have the opportunity as one of the leading democracies of this world to also lead the way in terms of further reform.

I also believe that we are going to have to look at the structure of this Parliament and we are going to have to look at the fact that we cannot reduce the expression of the population of this country to simply an issue of first past the

post as has been the case today. I believe that in the future there has to be serious discussion about the composition of this Parliament that allows not only for those who pass the post first in respect of constituencies but also that speaks to some proportion of representation as well, such that the balance does not go in the nature of proportional representation but it still allows for the collective expression of those who voted across boundaries to have some level of representation within this Parliament.

I also feel that we have to ask ourselves serious questions because for that one vote we are relying on so much information and expression of will. Some people who can speak to national policy issues, because of the nature of the volatile world in which we live and the complexity of the issues that are facing us as a country, which have more immediate implications for the quality of life that we enjoy and for the nature and levels and security of employment than we may care to relate at this stage.

Some people have a greater degree and a level of personal representation, such that if there was a system of local government, that need might be satisfied in those circumstances. Some people feel that a person should be able to do more and that a person can have a perspective of what has to be done at the national level, while at the same time maintaining the essence of being able to represent people's interests at a constituency level, because as long as you remain in close contact with the people, you ensure that your policies, hopefully, would be rooted in the perspective and a desire to improve the state of affairs of those persons. I would like to believe that I support the latter.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is, these are issues that the public is going to require of us to start the debate on. We have a responsibility in the early part of the 21st Century to determine whether a system that essentially has been in existence for over three centuries is still as relevant to us today as it was when it was first used.

Mr. Speaker, where are we today instead? A Democratic Labour Party that is playing cheap politics with the issues of this Electoral and Boundaries Commission's Report; we have a Commission that was unanimous, with officers nominated by them; they have a situation where they have people purporting in the newspapers to be interested in those seats but because one Leader cannot have prominence over the other Leader internally, we end up with this kind of division on a matter as fundamental and as serious as this.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end on one point because this, perhaps, says it all. The Prime Minister made the point this morning Reporting from the 1966 Constitutional Conference in London, as far back as then this issue has divided the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party. four seats. If one divides that 20-year increase by the number of seats, it doubles the average of an existing constituency.

We felt then, as we did in 1985 when we amended the Constitution when we got the chance, and as we do now, that the entity to have the responsibility for the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is an independent entity rather than it being left to a Minister to decide where boundaries should run. Sir, we felt then, as we do now, that there is too much serious work to be done on the ground and the principle of equity must always be there.

Indeed when you read the Third Schedule of the Constitution, the principle that requires all constituencies to be within a particular range, recognises that no one set of people should be disadvantaged in their ability to determine a Government by determining the Member of Parliament. If you have a constituency with 10 000 people and one with 5 000 people, it means that the one with 5 000 people, the person there has a greater proportion in determining the outcome of the election than the one with 10 000 people.

If the Electoral and Boundaries Commission had not acted in the way it has now acted in this Report, in my respectful view, they would have been subject to an administrative justice action for judicial review for breaching the Constitution in the terms as required by the Third Schedule in respect of the range. Sir, that went in the Constitution for a reason so as not to give any one set of people in a constituency any more weight than another set.

Essentially, everybody's vote in this country should approximate to the same value that we have found after 17 years of experience that the 10 per cent variation is a little too tight and that would bring us back before a boundary change every 10 years. We are saying that 15 per cent represents the outer limit, because anything in excess of 15 per cent carries the variation too wide but a 10 per cent keeps us too close and too tight. We hope that there will be a judicious balance for the application of the 15 per cent variable.

Sir, should this Report be accepted by this Parliament, then an appropriate amendment to the Third Schedule to the Constitution will be back shortly so as to ensure that we give good effect to the Commission's Report.
5.40 p.m.

Sir, this country has had a long and distinguished history in respect of the governance of the country as well as in the conduct of elections. In CARICOM it is not unknown now for observer groups to be invited to preside over the conduct of elections.

I have had the good fortune of managing two by-elections and one national election and I say to you that we have some of the highest standards being displayed by the officers of our Electoral and Boundaries Commission and the staff. The concept of a person voting twice or stealing in an

election is so alien a concept that we do not even discuss it in this country. This is a tribute to the quality of our systems and staff that this country's name has never been tarnished by the slightest allegation of impropriety. Sir, in some countries people get 110 per cent of the vote before the poll closes. They get more votes than there are people registered to vote. Mr. Speaker, we do not have that in Barbados. I do not know of anybody who can try to vote in more than one constituency.

Our system of vital statistics in relation to the workings of the electoral office is so competent that you do not have to tell them that people are dead because there is an automatic clearing process when people come on the list at 18 as well as when people die. Once the death certificate is issued, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission also makes the adjustment.

Sir, there is one issue we have to look at and that is the extent to which we have persons remaining on the list who have been living overseas for 15 years. A periodic enumeration, in my view, is the way to address these issues, bearing in mind that because persons are living overseas, it does not mean they will not come home to vote.

When we look at the percentage turnout in elections, we must remember that those of us who have responsibility for the conduct of individual campaigns will see how many circulars come back at the end of a campaign. In truth and in fact, when a constituency has 62 or 63 per cent turnout, very often it is more realistically like 73 per cent turnout because of the number of persons on that list who live overseas and were not present to vote so we must not be so harsh on ourselves sometimes.

I believe that democracy is healthy and well in this country. I recognise that there is room for improvement and we as politicians will be doing ourselves, the country and the legacy we have been building, a disservice if we do not come to the point of engaging on national issues that affect the health of our democracy in a serious and mature manner and not reflecting the kind of political cronyism and immaturity that we have seen in this debate today. Mr. Speaker, I truly hope we can rise above it.

Mr. Speaker, in no way should the inability of the Democratic Labour Party to settle its affairs in George Street spill out and affect the affairs of the rest of this country. I hope for their sake and the sake of this country that they will recognise that they must do better and that the country expects better of them. This is not a country that has ever seen its politicians and public officials behaving in the way in which they have been behaving.

I believe if we know with a certain assurance that there are two good parties operating with a certain level of

maturity and commitment to the people's business that we can build appropriately on the foundations of those who have gone before in guaranteeing the security of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this Report as worthy of the support of all Members of this Chamber. I salute the members of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission nominated both by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for their unanimous Report. I also commend the staff who worked exhaustively for ten weeks to prepare the kind of information that allows this House to make the decision on the best possible information that we can have.

We should count ourselves lucky for having a system that is far above any level of accusation and that in spite of the fact that members are nominated from different political parties that they can reach unanimity in a Report that speaks to partisan political interest.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I have to speak on this matter because it directly relates to an adjustment to your constituency which you will not be able to speak on, as well as an adjustment to my constituency. It also stretches to the western side of my constituency into the area of St. Michael South East.

Sir, we have exhausted a lot of excessive energy on this debate and although I believe every issue before Parliament deserves extensive discussion, the reality is that this issue has been in the public domain for a considerable time. Sir, the public is not waiting on Parliamentarians to make them aware that there is going to be adjustments in the individual constituencies across Barbados.

I believe that both political parties have a responsibility to express their views on how these changes will affect the lives of people in Barbados. We were treated to a discourse which dealt with a methodological approach to this whole exercise about whether the system is democratic or not and both political parties gave legitimacy to the mechanisms in the form of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission to decide if there were too many people in a constituency or not and if there was need for an adjustment.

5.50 p.m.

Sir, it is like attempting to manipulate people believing that they know what is good for the people and the people do not know what is good for themselves. If you as a political party agree to a system and the system functions in accordance with all the tenets provided within the mechanism, how is it that when the action is carried out you can feel so passionate and feel that something is fundamentally wrong with the action that was carried out by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission?

There is something sneaky, a latent element to this. When politicians believe that they are clever enough to manipulate and control minds, they embark on programmes and arguments like the one you heard today from the Opposition. The Opposition is seeking a scapegoat, searching for a political plank for political survival. Even businessmen sometimes look for angles to make their product by advertising.

Only last week I was reflecting on Joseph McCarthy with McCarthyism and I had an opportunity to look into the minds of these extremists who distort and manipulate people. You see it in Nazism, in Fascism, in McCarthyism and you are seeing it now in "DLPism", an attempt to find a scapegoat to make themselves relevant to this society.

There are so many pertinent and important issues that ought to attract the attention of the Opposition Party, and many days when we come to this Parliament little or nothing is said about these important issues. What you are hearing every now and then is something emotional – crime. Today I was surprised I did not hear an emotional argument surrounding gerrymandering. I anticipated that they would speak about gerrymandering but they did not. They found another angle to give the impression that the system that was put in place by them and this Government is obsolete and irrelevant and there is a necessity for fundamental change in the system.

A few weeks ago in the public domain, that was not the argument. The argument was that they toured Barbados from North to South, from East to West but they have no problem with it as long as they can be assured that the adjustments will be made two years in advance of a general election. That was the fundamental argument we were hearing in the public domain and today we are hearing something completely different.

We must not be misled by these misrepresentations, Sir. That is why I said we spent so much time. When someone puts a system in place and then he comes back and criticises it without showing in what manner it has malfunctioned or in what manner the personalities involved in the system did not conduct their business within the framework of legitimacy which was given to it – if those arguments were advanced, we could support the views of the Opposition. But I am of the view that all that they are doing over and over, especially in these latter stages, is searching for a scapegoat to become relevant to the people of Barbados.

The boundaries were not adjusted in 1999 and yet the entire Opposition was almost wiped out. It did not make any difference where the boundary lines were, they were knocked out in every constituency across St. Michael. So adjusting the boundaries do not make a difference. The

reality is that if you are elected to serve people, you are elected to serve people. My position on this is very clear, Sir. Wherever black people live and wherever poor people live and I have the responsibility to represent their interests I am there to represent the interests of my people and I know that this same position is held by many people looking for a secure haven.

If you were working with your constituents every day from the day you won a seat you would not have to ask for two years' notice in advance to start campaigning. You should be campaigning from the morning after the people voted for you and you should make yourself accessible to the people at all times. If all of your candidates and representatives were working with that philosophy in mind there would be no problem wherever the boundaries are Sir, for me, and I am certain for you as well.

I will be losing the western side of my constituency as long as this Report is supported by the majority and I have no doubt that I will be losing Flint Hall, Bridge Road, all of those areas in close proximity to Carrington Village sandwiched between Carrington and Deane's Village. The area is a fairly common topography. It has a natural relationship with Carrington Village but I am sure, Sir, you will be well protected between myself and the representative of St. Michael South Central. You are in safe hands and the people in those districts would not have only you as representative but they will now have three people to represent their interests. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central has a lot of cross-border relationships and I have some cross-border relationships as well so that you are well tied in and secured. On the last occasion I won that area.

To the eastern side of my constituency the representative of St. Michael South East controlled to this point the Haggatt Hall, Monroe Road, Pasture Road, Roberts Road coming right back to Haggatt Hall, Cutting Road. Sir, I have a very close relationship with those people and I have served my people well. You have nothing to worry about. If the representative of the Democratic Labour Party were doing the people's business and not being involved in internal struggles they would have already established the social, political and, if necessary, the economic links, by helping the people materially and financially in those areas so that even if the boundaries were shifted, no problem. The candidates who were there before could come to the person's rescue and assistance but they cannot, and they would like to have a delay or deliberately misrepresent the truth in order to convince the people that this dispensation had to do something which is sinister in order to regain control of the electorate of Barbados.

That is not so, Sir. That is the way they feel about people, not how people feel about themselves or about them.

The people are already clear. There is a feeling already about them and the people know themselves that the problem in this whole exercise is that the Democratic Labour Party Opposition does not know who is who in the political dispensation to which they belong.

I can assure you, Sir, that there are a number of variables that I have examined and any adjustments in the areas to which I refer we have nothing to worry about. There are a number of commonalities between Barkers Road and Haggatt Hall: one topography, one sociology, across those areas, the very same people. The delineation between the highway and my constituency does not create a division between people to people. The relationships are common and the bonds are strong. They have a close religious connection with the St. Barnabas Church and the Antioch Church in that section so that I have no fear. I am not going to distort or confuse the minds of people. The people want politicians to pay greater attention to their needs and if, as a result of adding two additional candidates to the electoral list and moving it from 28 candidates to 30 it gives the people greater individual access to their Parliamentary representative, I believe every sensible and sober minded individual in Barbados would support such an adjustment.

Sir, as a representative you know every individual in your constituency, regardless of whether you employ ten officers to work with you, they want to see the representative. I see people every day at my house and at my office. When they come to the office they want to see me because they place confidence in me.
6.00 p.m.

Sir, people who are older than I am, and older than my mother voted for me. They come and talk to me in confidence and trust. So in our political culture, there is a demand to relate directly to the parliamentary representatives, and if this democracy is to function effectively, then we cannot have an excessive amount of persons looking forward to meet with the individual representative and not having access to him or her.

Sir, when they finish communicating with us and telling us their problems, we have to leave our offices and journey to the different public institutions, Government and private, to talk to people. A problem may appear to be very small to the person who brings it to you, but sometimes you have to spend two years trying to resolve that problem because of the bureaucratic system. You have to go back to A, B, C, and D, a thousand times to resolve the problem.

You come to Parliament on Tuesday, you see constituents on Wednesday, and you have three working days in the week to get to National Housing, the Welfare Department, to resolve a problem at the Labour Department, to deal with the NIS problems for the people. Somebody may be involved in a matter before the court, and if you

are not there to assist them in one way, you have to be there to assist them in another way. If there is a house fire you have to be wrestling sometimes even with the public officers and the Ministers, in order to get some assistance. Sir, it takes a lot of energy, especially, out of a Backbencher. I can imagine how rough it is for you, having to play a relatively balanced role in these circumstances, not being able to deal with matters with any degree of militancy whatsoever, because your post requires that you become the most passive entity in this Chamber.

Sir, sometimes in these cases, people might not like your style, but you have to be extremely militant and aggressive in trying to achieve your goals on behalf of the poor in this country. I see no problem and I do not see why it should have taken us so long to convince the Opposition that this is a necessity. You have to explain to them that there are usually two and three layers of Government in some countries, point out to them that there is a local Government and a central Government in Trinidad and Tobago, in Jamaica, in Guyana, in Australia, in Canada, in the United States of America, make them understand that there are different layers of Government in order to meet the individual needs of the people.

Sir, the things that politicians have to do at the central level in some countries, are taken care of by the local Government and their officers. I have to travel through my constituency sometimes and look for the numbers of electric poles in order to come back to the office to write a letter to send to one of the Government departments so that they can send to the Barbados Light & Power Company in order for me to have electricity in a particular district.

Sir, if you had two layers of Government and you had a counsellor in the local Government, he would be able to take care of those matters within the constituency. Although we have officers working in our individual offices, they are not vested with the authority or power to go to a Government department and demand to be seen by a Government officer, although they are citizens of this country. Sometimes there are some permanent secretaries, senior administrative officers and senior officers in the civil service with inflated egos, who believe that they can treat working class, black parliamentarians, especially the ones whom they believe are not professionals, with contempt. There is a phobia that exists in them, that if we cannot get through to them, no junior officer in a constituency office would ever be able to engage them in five minutes of conversation. They hustle them off the telephone. If they go to the offices, they have to sit a long time with a lot of people with frozen faces walking in front of them who do not have the courtesy to say, "good morning".

When you speak about this behaviour, Sir, as a Parliamentary representative, they further alienate you. I do

not have any problem and I do the best that I can, and not speaking or responding to me, is no problem. If I come to do the people's work and I cannot get through there, and I go to a higher stage and I cannot get through, I will know that it is a lost case, and I will have to take a new form of action.

Sir, it is a necessity that in order to carry out the governance of this country in an effective way, we have a system that responds, in a very wide way, to the individual demands of the electorate in Barbados. I do not know, Sir, if I, or anybody can explain that any better. I do not know what is necessary in order to convince the Opposition, if we have not convinced them before, that this is imperative in the system. You either have to have this, or you have to have another layer of Government, or a complete restructure of the Governance so that an officer or some individual can have the authority and power to get things done. That is what representative Government is all about, representing the interests of the people.

As I said before, Sir, in Barbados, culture is that the people expect to reach out and touch the parliamentary representative, talk on a one to one basis to their parliamentary representatives and get them to do the things that they find difficult to do for themselves.

On such a basis, Sir, the points that I have placed before this Chamber are enough for me to find a sound rationale to support this Report from the Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

I want to thank you, Sir, for listening to me so patiently.

Thank you.
6.10 p.m.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak very briefly from the perspective of one of those Members of Parliament right in the middle of the vortex which has resulted in this Report being put before this House today and the Resolution for the acceptance of the Report and the consequential actions.

Sir, I take no pleasure in accepting the recommendations of the Report. In effect, this Report calls for the removal of 2 156 voters from the constituency of Christ Church East. I say that to indicate that the constituency which I have had the honour and the privilege of representing since 1999 is a constituency I have grown to love, notwithstanding the burdens associated with the representation at this level and the geographic spread of the constituency stretching as it does on the coast by Silver Sands Resort and St. Christopher's Church and inland by the Barbados National Oil Company at Woodbourne in St. Philip. The constituency of Christ Church East has coastal regions. One of the most wonderful beach parks in

Barbados is the Silver Sands park. It has some very lush and rich sugarcane fields in Lowthers Hill, Walrond and the Charnocks area. It has oil production in Woodbourne and the northern parts. It has an agricultural base and a fishing base. It has an industry base at the Grantley Adams Industrial Park. It has hotels in Inch Marlow and Silver Sands. It has working class neighbourhoods. It has affluent neighbourhoods. It has rich people and poor people.

Sir, I have thoroughly enjoyed representing all of that constituency. For me, it has been more of a pleasure than of a burden but it was quite a burden nevertheless which I took the greatest pleasure in undertaking, whether it is in the north of the constituency in the areas of St. Patricks, Lowthers, Fair View, Charnocks, Lowlands or Coverley on the north side of the ABC Highway, whether it is in the centre of the constituency in areas like Parish Land, Pilgrim Road, Thyme Bottom, Fairy Valley, Coverley Heights and the village as well, Callenders, Thornbury Hill and Gibbons Terrace or whether it is in the southern region going towards the coast in such areas as Enterprise, Gibbons Boggs, Pegwell Boggs, St. Christopher, Silver Sands, Chancery Lane, Ealing Park and Long Beach.

Sir, personally, I have no interest in giving up one square foot of the constituency. However, I must put this adjustment in its proper context. This is not the first boundary adjustment neither is it going to be the last. We have had boundary adjustments in 1971 and 1991 and we will have them in the future.

This is the reality we face and no amount of cheap political gimmickry by the Opposition will change that. No attempt, as paltry as it was and no smoke and mirrors by the Opposition, to portray this as being some major attempt at political manipulation and no attempt to set this up as some plot hatched by the Barbados Labour Party to entrench itself in office will deviate from the fact that there needs to be changes in the population density in particular areas around the Island. There is a need to make sure that people in the various communities around Barbados are able to have a fair chance at adequate representation by making sure that Members of Parliament are not overburdened and they are not given more than they can handle; that people have a reasonable opportunity for interaction with their Member of Parliament by way of a fair spread. The fact is that there happens, unfortunately, to be a deep and heavy concentration of voters in the constituency of Christ Church East. The constituency of St. Philip North has 9 024 voters. The constituency of St. Philip South has 10 262 voters. The constituency of Christ Church East has 8 853 voters. The constituency of Christ Church South has 7 992 voters and the constituency of Christ Church East Central has 9 311 voters. The national average as stipulated by the constitutional framework is 7 694 voters. So you have the difficult situation concentrated in a south eastern slice of the island all of these oversized constituencies.

Notwithstanding the fact that I would rather have kept all, as many as they are, that situation is complicated by the fact that the constituencies of St. Philip North, St. Philip South, Christ Church East and Christ Church South have a significant coastline but we cannot shed voters into the sea. We do not have offshore voters in any form or fashion so clearly the movement has to be inland or, as in this case, carved out to create an additional area. Therefore, that puts the constituency of Christ Church East in the situation which would see almost the entire northern part of it being transferred to St. Philip West based on these proposals from the Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

Sir, for us on this Side, unlike the Democratic Labour Party, we do not need to create any false political events. We, on this Side, are not in a state of desperation or near disintegration. We are in a position to take conscious, deliberate and necessary action in the highest traditions of the good governance of Barbados. A central part of that good governance has been the orderly administration of matters as they relate to the electoral system in this land and providing the right and the opportunity for all persons over the age of 18 to have a say in the government which would represent them.

So for us on this Side, particularly I, having to shed a considerable part of the area which I am very comfortable representing is something that I have to view with calm and dispassion. I understand and I can empathise, in fact, I can feel the various emotions that will go through the hearts, the minds and the souls of those persons who would be affected. 6.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 20 years since we have moved away from confining political boundaries within parish boundaries, we have had the situation where, from time to time, as we took Barbados as a single state to be divided into convenient political boundaries, with persons having an affiliation to the parish for the purpose of geography and for personal purposes but being identified with another parish for electoral purpose. Therefore, I can understand the consternation, the anxiety and the frustration that some persons will feel by virtue of living in Christ Church, having been in a constituency with a Christ Church designation and finding themselves in a constituency with a St. Philip designation. The fact that we are pursuing this course of action does not mean that we are insensitive to those feelings. While this might be new for those persons so affected, it is something through which persons across the Island, from time to time, have undergone. Places such as Frere Pilgrim, Christ Church, has been associated with St. George South for many years. Parts of Christ Church West are already in St. Michael.

Sir, I say to my constituents in St. Patricks, Walronds, Lowthers, Lead Vale, Fair View, Lowlands, Charnocks, this

is not an action of insensitivity. If it was left up to me, I would keep all of it. I do not have any favourite parts of the constituency. I represent the entire constituency: from the coast, to the fishermen, to the rural parts, to the agricultural labourers, from the villages to the heights and I would do it all again. The reality is that we do have to abide with the laws of this land. In fact, we have been in breach of the section of the Constitution that indicates the size of constituencies must not vary more than plus or minus ten per cent of the average. Therefore, this Report by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission must be seen within that context of restoring normalcy to the situation, of routing boundaries within the four corners of the law. Therefore, that is the context in which I would want to offer my support to these proposals.

Mr. Speaker, as a representative for Christ Church East, for the entire constituency, and not withstanding what proposals for changes there are, I will give the assurance to all residents of that constituency that for as long as it was defined since 1999, they will get my fullest representation.

I am not one of those who will determine that since this section is going over into St. Philip West, I have nothing to do with it. I am the Member for Christ Church East until there is in force a new Member representing those persons. They will not be left in the lurch. They will not be caught in between representatives. Sir, I am proud of the fact that with the assistance of my colleagues in this BLP administration, I have been able to provide services such as roads, gas, work, assistance with community groups, assistance with the schools, in all three of the major areas mentioned, the northern, southern and central components.

Sometimes persons do not appreciate the range of activities but in my constituency as it stands now, there are three primary schools, 52 rum shops; 3 Anglican churches; 1 Methodist; 2 Seventh Day Adventists; 5 Nazarene churches and about 30 Pentecostal churches.

Sir, it has been my pleasure to work with each of these groups and, therefore, it is with a heavy heart that I acknowledge the recommendation of this Report which would see me at the next election, parting company with any part of that family of Christ Church. I say to them, this is part of the ongoing administration of our county. It has happened in 1971, 1991, and I am sure that it will happen again.

Therefore, it is in that context as one being affected by these proposals, I want to indicate that I will support these proposals such as they are, not necessarily out of the pleasure that it gives me but out of necessity, in order that we can continue this tradition of strong representation to all of the electorate in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give my support to the Resolution before the House.

I am not surprised at the position the DLP is taking on this very important matter which goes to the very heart of Parliamentary representation in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with an institution of Parliament which is 362 years.

On Sunday afternoon, the General Assembly of the Organisation of American States is going to be opened in Barbados. It is the first time that we are going to have the honour of opening that distinguished body of which we are a member. There are 34 countries in the hemisphere of the Americas which will be represented at the General Assembly and none of them with an institution of Parliament that is nearly as old as 362 years. That is a great distinction for us.

Mr. Speaker, it was not by any happenstance that permission was sought and given for the private dialogue to meet on Sunday afternoon in the Chamber of the Other Place. It speaks to a long history of good governance, adherence to the rule of law and to respect for human rights.

Sir, as a young student in London when the Independence talks were underway, I remember the then Democratic Labour Party had fought the Barbados Labour Party for the retrenching in our Constitution for an Electoral and Boundaries Commission. I happened and was pleased that many years later, as a Member of this distinguished Parliament, I was one who was part of an administration that had ushered in an Electoral and Boundaries Commission. 6.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, to this day, the Democratic Labour Party does not care for an Electoral and Boundaries Commission and it has been much abused.

Mr. Speaker, I keep reminding Honourable Members that there are two basic functions of this Parliament and all the Parliaments in the Westminster system. These functions are to levy taxes and pass laws. I remember when the Democratic Labour Party abolished local Government in 1969 and I have seen, in my time, constituencies move from 24 to 27 and now to 28 and this was very much influenced by population shifts.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. John complaining that something is wrong with seeking to move constituencies from 28 to 30. Mr. Speaker, the population dynamics of it are simple. The Attorney General made passing reference to the fact that over the past 20 years 50 000 people came onto the list and this is not surprising to me because there was a bulge in our population.

Honourable Members will remember the bulge at primary and secondary schools. In the 1960's we referred

to the temporary classrooms as the “Sandiford ovens” because we did not have enough seats in the secondary school system and people also slept two and three in a bed in the hospital because of this bulge. We saw the bulge in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and now in 2002 we are looking to a situation where we are hearing in the context of the debate on pensions and national insurance that by the year 2010 the population pyramid in Barbados is going to look different from the way in which it looked in the 1970's and 1980's because the bulge has moved along. We should not be surprised at the numbers that have come onto the electoral list because the right to vote comes at the age of 18 and stays with us until we die.

Sir, I do not understand why the question of the numbers is generating so much debate because our Parliamentary system has evolved and it will continue to evolve. I hope that in my time it will continue to mature and that it will become more consultative even than it is today, that it will become a Parliament which we can continue to be proud of us and will represent the reality of Barbados. The same quality of representation that people wanted in the 1960's is not what they require in the 1990's and it is certainly not what will be required in these early years of the 21st Century.

Sir, I have a problem with people who want to quarrel with the number for the sake of quarrelling with it. Mr. Speaker, I speak about this both at home here and abroad all the time that I have grown up in Barbados and the Barbadian electorate has always preferred to have more seats in its Parliament in order that it might have more of a one-on-one representation than less seats and less of an opportunity to have a representative with whom you can relate.

Mr. Speaker, I tell people outside of Barbados that I represent a constituency where people expect me to know them by first name, to know when children are born and to know intimate details of every gap and alley in the constituency.

I have watched communities shrink away in the City of Bridgetown and new communities begin to be born and mature in other parts of the City of Bridgetown. Sir, this is natural in communities and I do not understand why there should be an element of suspicion and fear attached to the fact that there simply is need for a wider representation among us.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen successive Administrations, both the Democratic Labour Party and the Barbados Labour Party, recognise and respond to this reality. Let us face it, we now have constituency offices that are well-equipped with computers and furniture. When my constituents come to my office they can sit comfortably and they like the idea of making an appointment to see me. Sir, interesting things

happen in Bridgetown... People go home, cook and oversee their children's homework, bathe and dress and at 10 o'clock they come to see me at my constituent office. Sir, we have Constituency Assistants and the same way people make an appointment to see their doctor or lawyer, they make an appointment to see their Member of Parliament. This is so well-entrenched that nobody stops me at the side of the road to carry on business because they know they can have an appointment in my office and their business can be taken care of there.

Sir, there is a role and function for Constituency Assistants that is well-established and well-supported that is in recognition of the quality rather than quantity of representation which Barbadians have become accustomed to and wish to continue to have.

Sir, I heard reference being made to boundaries. I have contested seven elections in the City of Bridgetown, two of them in 1976. On May 12, 1976, I fought in a by-election after 15 years in Opposition and on September 2, 1976, three months later, I fought again in a General Election for my seat. Sir, this was the only time I ran with the same boundaries. Every time I ran after that, the boundaries have differed and I am not so naive to think that in every case the rationale for the change was objective because in those days I was ringed around with my back to the sea, as I still am, in the City of Bridgetown, by my opponents.
6.40 p.m.

I can call some of those names now because they are not in here anymore. They are Brandford Taitt, Erskine Sandiford, Richie Haynes, these were the heavy rollers in the opposing camp who ringed me around. Sir, wherever they sought to move me, I was going into “enemy territory”.

Mr. Speaker, there was no quarrelling, you just did what you had to do. Sir, in one election the electoral boundary was at Jemmott's Lane, then the next election it was Dunlow Lane and it is now up to Beckles Road and going further into Bay Land.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Sir, I have told my opponent or he who is going to oppose me in this coming General Elections, whenever it comes, that I am going to fight him down to the wire for this seat, as I have fought opponents before him.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Sir, as I have fought, Al Gilkes, who is my friend. As I have fought the late Lisle Carmichael, not once but twice; as I have fought my cousin, Peter Miller, where I won and lost; as I have fought John Connell, Mr. Pandor and the Mighty Gabby. Mr. Speaker,

I told him that I am going to fight him down to the wire because I do not take anything for granted.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Sir, I would say to my opponent that you cannot go into a district and let anyone hear you asking where the boundaries are. You must find out those things beforehand and then you go into the constituency with confidence as though you know where the boundaries are.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not know who is leader in the Democratic Labour Party from the front or behind. Sir, there was once a song about who is leading from the front and behind. I really do not know who is leading. All I know is, wherever the Barbados Labour Party tells me to run, I am going to go into the constituency and do the best I can.

Mr. Speaker, in reality I can tell you that I have virtually run in a different constituency six of the seven times that I have run and if I get the opportunity to run again this time, which I very much expect to do, I would be running in a different constituency seven out of eight times.

Sir, this is not only true of the City of Bridgetown. I looked at the Commission's Report and this matter of the conditionality that a certain amount of time must pass before an election is called is not in synch with our style of politics. I do not think that Barbadians would go for the system of the USA where there is a fixed term of office and every four years the election will be called.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Sir, a country must be free to do what it did in 1994 where a motion of no confidence was brought against a Prime Minister and won it and returned the country to good governance. We must have that freedom and I am not going to support that other way of doing business.

Mr. Speaker, it is most unworthy of the Democratic Labour Party Commissioners to suggest that they would give their support to the condition that says that two years should elapse between the implementation and the next General Election. This has never happened in my twenty years of being in politics and I will defend to death, the right of a Prime Minister in Barbados to retain that privilege to name the election date.

Mr. Speaker, timing, as they say in this life is often and always of the essence and how and when you call is a very important thing. Mr. Sandiford made a bad decision in 1994

when he called and gave the Opposition three months to do work to win a Government.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, this is unthinkable in our system of governance. Sir, all it says to me is that this is an Opposition not only in chaos as they are now trumpeting to the world. I have been in Opposition for fifteen years before 1976; eight years between 1996 and 1994 and I have never seen an Opposition washing its dirty linen and blood on the grass like I am seeing now. It is not fitting and a good thing to do. People must not assume that because I am on the side which is in Government now that I take any glee from that. This is a blot on the quality of governance. Sir, governance comes from Both Sides of this Chamber and it is a serious blot.

Sir, I sat in Opposition for a period of eight years almost exactly the same period that the gentlemen on the Other Side of this Chamber are sitting in Opposition. In those years I knew what it was to awake one morning and discover that we were not even the official Opposition anymore. Sir, that was not an easy thing, and I was sitting in the Other Place and I refused to give up my seat. I said that I would have to be revoked because I do not believe this was what the people wanted, because the people do not only choose who they want to be in Government but they also chose who they wish to be in the Opposition. There is a role and function for the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition is not being paid to do anything. He has a role and function to perform and it concerns us all, including the Members on this Side, that role is not being performed.

Sir, I know what it is, in eight years, to awake one morning and discover that you have been overtaken by a third Party and you are not the official Opposition. They did not know where in this Parliament to put our Members. I know what it is, Mr. Speaker, in that eight-year period to change one Leader for another without any blood on the grass or running in the gutter in Roebuck Street as it is running in the gutter in George Street, then to come in mid-term and unseat a Government in eight years.

It is a very sad commentary that in eight years Opposition politics in Barbados has come to where it is at today. It is now the subject of cartoons in newspapers, which are less than flattering. It is now the subject of letters to the Press, when we should now be looking to the Opposition to give its input in weighty matters of State. Barbados is very finely poised in trade negotiations. Barbados is very finely poised in respect to where we stand in the hemisphere and that is the importance of the OAS General Assembly and we can have no input from the Opposition Bench. Mr. Speaker, it does not speak well. Those are the things that we should be debating in here. It should not be a matter of quantity of representation but quality of representation.

The Honourable Attorney General raised a number of matters that I would love to speak to but I am aware of the lateness of the hour and that there are others who wish to speak. However, I will say that we must begin to face these facts in this House. There has to be a restructuring, a continuing evolution so that this House is better geared than it is today to face the reality and the way that politics will work in the 21st Century.

We are beginning to see the emergence of some Standing Committees. At last we have a Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and I believe that a few more will come in this Session. This is very important. This week the Right Honourable Prime Minister has again made reference to the non-functioning of the Public Accounts Committee. These are the things that this House, when it is looking at process and governance of the Chamber over which you preside, should be debating in here, not the kind of trivia that I am hearing. This debate must not be allowed to go to a level to which the Opposition seems to want to take it. Those are not the things that should be allowed.

Sir, we should be looking to a wider horizon. We should be looking to bring Barbadians into a wider perspective on new forms of governance. We are looking, as a Government, to invite Barbadians to look at matters of taxation, pension and to review the National Insurance Scheme. We need to be reviewing how this Chamber works and I would have wished that this debate had addressed itself more to those issues.

Mr. Speaker, I trust that would come on another day and I am very much obliged to you, Sir, for my opportunity to have spoken in this matter.
6.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Honourable Members who have spoken in this very important debate and to thank the Honourable Members on this Side for the very clear indication that in this matter, the Government is going to stand united, just as the Electoral and Boundaries Commission stood united, in relation to the recommendations contained in the Report before us.

Sir, I believe that I should properly start my winding up by again stating that it is my intention and the intention of the Government of Barbados, to accept the Report submitted to this House as a unanimous Report by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, whose membership is drawn from nominations made by the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister of Barbados. We are going to accept the Report.

I am also, Sir, going to have it written into the record, that I want to vote for the Report, and to state as well, that I

have no interest or desire to want to draw the constituency boundaries of Barbados. I have no interest or desire to do it and to the extent, Mr. Speaker, that I referred to the matter earlier, it was not to issue a threat that if the House does not approve the Report, that I am threatening to rewrite the boundaries. It was merely to draw to the attention of the House that there is a provision written into the Constitution for this House not accepting the Report of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, and I shall read it again, since obviously, the Honourable Member for St. John who is a lawyer does not want to come into contact with the law as set out in the Constitution.

At Section 41D(4) our Constitution says that where the motion for the approval of any draft made under this section, a draft such as we are discussing, is rejected by either House or is withdrawn by the leave of each House, the Minister shall amend the draft and lay the amended draft before each House, not later than two months after its rejection or withdrawal as the case may be.

The point I am making, Sir, is that if this House were to act on what is being put before us by the Democratic Labour Party, and was not to approve this Report that has been submitted to Parliament by the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, as Minister responsible for electoral affairs, I would have a constitutional duty. I put it, Sir, as strongly as that, I would have a duty under the Constitution of Barbados, within two months to bring an amended Report to this Parliament.

Sir, it is recognising what is provided for in the law, and the Honourable Member for St. John should want to put the matter in those terms, know it to be a distortion of what has really been adverted to, which is merely further additional evidence, as if any was needed, on the part of certain sections of the Democratic Labour Party to have this Report embroiled in a swirl of controversy for the sake of controversy.

Mr. Speaker, there are many important parts of the Commonwealth that pride themselves on respect for parliamentary democracy, that do not know what it is to have a boundaries commission constituted to begin with because they cannot get one formed. They could not get a boundaries commission formed represented from two sets of parties. They could not get a boundaries commission to submit a Report. They could not get a boundaries commission to submit the unanimous Report, on a matter as divisive as constituency boundaries. Sir, we have a treasure in this country, where we can constitute something as fundamental as a boundaries commission to take the responsibility for deciding how many constituencies there should be and the boundaries for those constituencies out of the province of narrow partisan discretion of a politician.

I am a politician, Sir, and put it in the hands of a body in which all parties can have a say, and we do not recognise that countries would be glad to have such a treasure. Sir, we have an additional treasure, that is, we have responsible Barbadians, who can see the national purpose. It is part of the great richness of the modern Barbadian democracy that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, even though it comprises people drawn from both sides of the fence, has always, at the end of the day, given this Parliament, the benefit of its wisdom by submitting unanimous Reports to us.

Sir, we would have a difficulty with our democracy, if we were to have a divided Report submitted to this Parliament where we had to judge; but we have the wisdom of a unanimous Report from serious, mature Barbadians drawn from both sides of the political fence. The spectacle that we have been asked to hold up to the Barbadian public, is for this Parliament, for no objective reason to discredit and repudiate an unanimous Report of a Commission drawn on a multiparty basis.

I ask, Sir, why? What scientific objective basis, would I have to administer, to now replicate the work of the Committee. I need, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, to emphasize the point that I made earlier, that the persons who constitute the Electoral and Boundaries Commission need to be allowed to speak to the public about the work that they do. I am familiar with the work that the officers of the Commission did, Sir, over ten months of field work, working in very difficult terrain at great expense to the officers themselves, having meetings running very late into the nights, at homes of officers and elsewhere, to develop the data upon which the Commission could have a representation made to it – not by me as Minister, but by the Chief Electoral Officer – that said after ten months of investigation, these are our recommendations to you, members of the Commission as to how the boundaries of Barbados should be drawn.

I had no input in that process, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps they should be allowed to talk about it, so that the Barbadian public can get a greater sense of confidence in this very important, vital, valuable, national process that we are in this Parliament this evening, being asked to abdicate.

Sir, if there is only one thing that the Leader of the Opposition spoke to that I support, is the need for openness. I see no difficulties whatsoever with the Members who constitute the Electoral and Boundaries Commission being allowed to take the public into their confidence about the work that the Commission does and the principles that the Commission takes into account when it reaches positions, as set out in the recommendations contained in this Report for this Parliament.

The Commission, Sir, should be independent, but its work should not be conducted in a vacuum or in secret. It should be made open, and the public would understand the

virtue of what we have before us, Sir, if they are to fully appreciate the dint of effort that was put in by the public officers of the Commission to get us to this position where we have something on which we can act.

I confess freely to the House, Mr. Speaker, that if I was now asked within two months to redraw the boundaries, I would not have done the field work, nor have a scientific, objective basis upon which to adjust the boundaries. Sir, if only for that reason alone, I am therefore anxious to approve this Report, because I understand what went into its preparation and again, at the start of my winding up, I want to thank and congratulate all those who have put us in this position to have this document that can only embellish the richness of our democracy.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke in terms of the fact that he was not consulted about matters pertaining to the Report. I do not think that was intended as a reflection on the quality of the Report but rather as a further comment on the structure of the modern day Democratic Labour Party.

I am sad that he has been put in this position because it is a matter of truth that there were, at one stage, proposals floating around that sections of St. Lucy that voted for the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should have been moved into St. Peter and sections of St. Peter that voted heavily for the Barbados Labour Party should be moved into St. Lucy. I know that he was consulted on those matters because I know what was the source of the consultation but that he was not consulted on this Report is a tragedy because there is nothing that is happening where the Electoral and Boundaries Commission is concerned that is not just another aspect of our national life which should be within the province of the understanding of the citizens of this country and the Honourable Members of this Parliament.

I fundamentally see nothing wrong with the work of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission being informed by processes of consultation that are open to Members of Parliament as well. It is a tragedy that a member of the Opposition could be in a position, although his party has nominated people to represent that party's interest on the Commission, where he has to say that he was not allowed to have access to the persons representing his interest so that his interest could be served, observed and respected.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John spoke in almost the exact terms he spoke in 1990. I want to be charitable and believe that what is happening here is merely a continuation of a great constitutional debate that began in 1966. Many people would not have read the Report of the Barbados Constitutional Conference in 1966. In 1966 there was an issue as to whether there should be an Electoral

and Boundaries Commission written into the Constitution on which the two parties were fundamentally divided. Sir, for the benefit of those Honourable Members of the House who have not read this Report, I would like to read page 5 of the Report.

“The Opposition Parties, the Barbados Labour Party and the Barbados National Party, were strongly of the view that the Constitution should provide that each constituency should return one member.”

“It was also proposed by the Opposition Parties that the Constitution should establish a permanent boundaries Commission to keep constituency boundaries under review.”

“The Government...”

[the government then was the Democratic Labour Party]

“...were unable to agree but accepted in principle that constituency boundaries should be kept under review by a Standing Committee of the House of Assembly.”

This means that the politicians in Parliament should decide the boundaries.

“They considered that the Assembly itself be left to set up this Committee and that the Committee should not therefore be established in the Constitution.”

Sir, this is a fundamental precept pertaining to our governance. We on this Side believe that the matter of fair and free elections is something that is so vital to the processes of our democracy that it must be enshrined in the Constitution. From the very outset, it has been the position of the Democratic Labour Party that there is no need to have the process by which elections are conducted and managed in this country a matter for the Constitution of the land, so in the absence of the general agreement, the Chairman of the Conference ruled that the provision pertaining to the Electoral and Boundaries Commission should not be included in the Constitution. In fact, it was only in 1985 that the opportunity arose under a Barbados Labour Party administration to correct what in my judgement would have been a fundamental flaw in our Constitution.

I believe, as all Honourable Members on this Side believe, that our Constitution would be defective if the management of the elections, if the processes governing the conduct of the elections and if the rules governing the way in which boundaries should be defined and determined are not included in the Constitution but should be left to the discretion of Members of this House. That is the issue that divides us.

We remain faithful to the precepts of the supremacy of the Constitution in matters that are fundamental to our

governance. We have already seen what terrible price can be paid as has happened in other jurisdictions when the matter of elections, its conduct, the determination of boundaries and size of constituencies are left to the narrow discretion of persons who have a vested interest in partisan terms to the way in which those matters are adjudicated. We, on this Side, feel that there is a strong constitutional moral position that informs the way in which the Barbados Labour Party has approached this matter and how we feel this matter should be continued to be managed in this country.

What, Sir, I ask, can be wrong in a society whose chief asset is its reputation for good governance having something as fundamental as the conduct of its elections rooted securely in its supreme law. That is what this debate is about. That is why on every opportunity as has happened in 1980 and apparently as should happen now there is no question on the Democratic Labour Party's part as to the merit of what is before the House in the Report. There is a fundamental opposition to the fact that a Commission is making the recommendations to us, although they had the opportunity to say who should be members of that Commission.

Sir, I have confidence in the Commission, even in the two Members of the Democratic Labour Party who constituted the Commission, to be able to see the national purpose, I really do. I accept this Report and am prepared to live with its consequences where the Barbados Labour Party is concerned. I say that because there are recommendations in this Report that would not please everyone who is now holding a seat on the part of the Barbados Labour Party. If the elections are fought and determined in the same way in which they were determined the last time around there would be some seats being held by the Barbados Labour Party that would be made very marginal, and our members understand that. We talked it through after seeing the Report and they are prepared to deal with the greater good.

This Report has not disadvantaged any of the sitting Members of the Opposition but there are Members on this Side who now find themselves with new boundaries that could be to their disadvantage; but we are prepared to accept it in the name of the greater good. Mr. Speaker, it is a very easy thing in a society like ours to pander to what I call, a fear of change. Naturally, many people in Barbados would say instinctively, why do we want 30 seats; and I understand that. I understand that whenever you increase the cost of Government that people are going to rebel but the argument that has been advanced in the pursuit of the need for 30 seats has not been challenged.

7.10 p.m.

There are 14 constituencies in Barbados that are presently structured in a manner within the Constitution. To allow them to remain in that way would be to perpetuate the constitutional provisions of our democracy and would

expose us, as the Member for Christ Church South has said, to be the subject of a constitutional review.

Mr. Speaker, we have to bring our electoral system within the context of this Constitution. In doing so, there are practical difficulties that can only be overcome by the creation of two new seats.

Mr. Speaker, if those two seats were being created in parts of the society where there was no reason that can be reasonably justified, I, too, would have a difficulty but they are those parts of the country where the constituencies are not only too large but where the population is growing. In central Barbados, between St. Thomas and St. James, the constituencies are too large, yet the population is growing, so that we accommodate today's circumstances and future prospects by making what, in every respect, is a desirable development.

Sir, as regards to size, as I have already said to the Barbadian public, our Parliament is ten seats less than Bermuda's and Bermuda's population is one-quarter that of Barbados'. It is ten seats less than the Bahamas which has the same population, yet the Bahamas have a local government. Sir, let us compare the relativity. To compare Jamaica and Trinidad and to say they have local government, is to distort the comparison and hence to lead to a flawed result. This Parliament is not a massive Parliament in relation to the responsibilities that Members have to undertake. Each Member of this Side has both national and constituency duties. There are some of us who have responsibilities to the region and also to the Commonwealth.

Sir, my Deputy Prime Minister chairs institutions across the world whose work affects the standing of the Barbados society; and that is part of her responsibility as a Member of Parliament.

Sir, we might well be one of the only Parliaments of our time where there are other Members of Parliament who have responsibilities that go beyond those of other Members in other jurisdictions. Therefore, why are we perpetuating this false comparison? Why do we not locate this issue in the peculiar circumstances of the Barbadian environment?

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. John has for the last ten years been talking about taking other factors into account. Sir, Schedule 3 of the Constitution sets out a provision that takes all factors into account – Fairness of Party:

“The electorate shall, so far as practicable, be equal in all constituencies:

Provided that the electorate in any constituency shall, so far as practicable, not exceed 110 per cent nor be less than 90 per cent of the total electorate divided by the number of constituencies therein.”

Mr. Speaker, all of us have a responsibility to see each of the voters as the same. Therefore, to have constituencies that are very diverse in size mean there will be some voters in very large constituencies that do not have equal access as they ought to – although I should not overstate that point. Equality of the rights of the representative would not be reflective in his or her discourse to that constituency.

Mr. Speaker, there is a call for taking other factors into account. What are those factors? The Member for St. John has now had a full ten years, not just to say take other factors into account but to say what are those factors so that these can be taken into account by objective persons in pursuing an electoral process which has at its core, fairness and parity. I am still waiting to hear.

Sir, in 1990 I spoke then, and will say now, that the Electoral and Boundaries Commission should not only look at both present or future circumstances, and not only to the existing population but to the way in which constituencies are changing because of the way they are zoned by the development plan. We know we have a law that governs the physical development that can give us an indication as to how the population of Barbados can be redistributed by reason of what is designated as residential and what is not.

Sir, the way in which this Report has been drafted, that kind of objective consideration has informed the work of this Committee, which allows us to speak to the possibility of 30 seats.

I understand the public is going to be concerned. We will have to face the fact that, in this country, it is easy to create issues on matters like these. Daylight saving time was an issue. Mr. Speaker, the issue is, did it make our democracy more workable? Does it meet the test of reasonableness? Sir, when all else fails, the only test that reasonable persons must resort to is the test of reasonableness. Mr. Speaker, I have heard no argument from the Other Side to challenge it on the test of reasonableness.

Mr. Speaker, the notion – I said notion rather than nonsense – that there should be a two year-period between the submission of this Report and the holding of election is again being forcibly urged by the Opposition. It is being urged on grounds that run from the farcical to the nonsensical. The Opposition seems to forget that they not only called an election in less than two years time after boundaries were changed but there was an incident in 1991 where a DLP candidate only became the candidate on the day of nomination itself, a Mr. Johnny Tudor. He had but weeks and not two years. He was even supported in that endeavour by the Member for St. John, who then saw nothing wrong with a man having only two weeks to being a candidate.

It must now be extended to two years, in 2002, otherwise one cannot properly deal with one's constituency.

Sir, as an article of faith, this argument is now being put to sensible people in Barbados as to ignore all of the evidence on the contrary that they have indulged in a practice that facilitates people having less than two years in which to be candidates and, by some invention of logic, come to the conclusion that unless there is not a period of two years, then the electoral process is flawed.

Sir, again the Constitution prescribes – and I am not empowered to enter any agreement with anybody that is contrary to the Constitution:

“After each Report, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission should submit to this Parliament a new Report not less than two years and not more than five after this Report is submitted.”

Therefore, if a Report is submitted in 1998, the next must be submitted no earlier than 2000 and no later than 2003.

Mr. Speaker, as Members of this Parliament, we have no jurisdiction over when the Electoral and Boundaries Commission submits their Report. If we had that jurisdiction then, perhaps, we might want to say that a rule included in the project that would require us to make sure that they submit a Report two years before an election is constitutionally due might be a reasonable rule. We cannot make the Constitution Review Commission function other than is prescribed, as is set out at section 41(D)(2) of our Constitution.

“Reports under subsection (1) shall be submitted by the Commission:

- (a) in the case of its first Report, not less than one or more than five years from the date of the appointment of members of the Commission.
- (b) in the case of any subsequent Report, not less than two or more than five from the date of the submission of its last Report.”

Sir, this Report reflects a degree of deliberate and judicious urgency on the part of the Commission, not only to honour its obligations under the Constitution but to put it in a position where that reasonable time that was allowed before the calling of any election has now become longer. That had never been afforded to any Prime Minister. Sir, this Report is before the House, a full 20 months before the deadline that has been set by Parliament for its submission. 7.20 p.m.

This Report is being discredited by those who have a political motive for wanting elections to be deferred as far

back as possible to give them the opportunity to indulge in what I believe to be the hopeless exercise now of putting the Democratic Labour Party house back together.

The Democratic Labour Party does not want to face an election although in the past they would have ordered an election within ten months of the Report being submitted but it now becomes, in their view, immoral to have an election within two years of the submission of the Report even when a candidate on their Side contested an election within two weeks. Sir, their view on the matter ranges from the nonsensical to the farcical.

The Honourable Member for St. John states that I made him come to that position and that I put the idea in his head.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I do not enter empty spaces. It was not I who was responsible for the concept of two years. I always said that there should be a decent interval between the submission of the Report and the holding of elections.

Sir, I stand on that statement because in 1998 my position was tested because a Report was done within just a few months before the elections and I said that I would not cause the country to face an election on a Report that was submitted so soon before the elections and, therefore, I do not have a point to prove.

Mr. Speaker, there is no constitutional basis for a Government of any complexion to have to be constrained to call an election over two years after a Report has been submitted because the Constitution prescribed the process for the submission of the Report and it also prescribed the process by which an election can be called.

Sir, I have become accustomed to this behaviour, as has the society, from the Leader of the Opposition. It is in the realm of his capacity, when it suits his political purpose to invent secret deals and establish secret companies in Miami to buy goods for the GEMS. Sir, there is nobody in the Democratic Labour Party to tell him that decent people do not accept those kinds of things from other people.

Sir, I fundamentally believe that a decent interval should elapse in any democracy between a Report which in this instance will create new constituencies and the voting of elections. Sir, after this Report has been approved and proclaimed by both Houses, the Barbados Labour Party has to go and create new constituency branches, put new executives and branch structures in place because, unlike the Democratic Labour Party, we do not have candidates as yet in those two constituencies. After the branches have been established, we then have to select candidates and give

them a reasonable time to become familiar with the branches. It is our duty from a political partisan point of view to manage our own affairs such that we allow a decent interval to elapse to implement a constitutional Report that sets in train the creation of new constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, there is no advantage to the Barbados Labour Party in creating two new constituencies and calling elections next week. The Democratic Labour Party confessed that they were not familiar with the context of the Report yet they already have candidates for the constituencies that are being created. Sir, the public will judge these things for what they are worth.

The fundamental issue in all of this that has not been controverted on any account is that under the present arrangement there are serious imbalances in the size of constituencies and their boundaries that put us in conflict with provisions of the Constitution of this country because half of our constituencies collide with the Constitution in terms of size and delineation. Mr. Speaker, we cannot run from this task. It is enjoined on us by the provision of our Supreme Law to change it and we are seeking to do this not by relying on the judgement of Members of this Side but by drawing on an independent group of ordinary Barbadian men and women. Sir, this a clear case of our democracy at its best.

I cannot leave this debate without thanking the Commission for having presided over an enumeration to allow us to get a clean list and for updating the listing. Since 1994, every effort has been made by the Commission to get a clean list and we have one, Sir.
7.30 p.m.

Sir, we have had to speak to one of the hardest things to deal with in a parliamentary democracy: to take imbalances in constituencies and correct them and to do it without dividing the society and we have a Report that allows us to do so.

I want to support the Report because it is the correct thing to do. It is a remarkable Report that will allow us to perpetuate our high standing among the nations of the world at a pace where Parliamentary democracy is second to none. I do not want to utilise a discretionary power in a Minister when an open, transparent system that can be the benefit of us all is available as a substitute.

Mr. Speaker, it is in the same context that I have the high honour and a duty to beg that this Resolution do now pass.

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

A division has been called for.

The bell was rung.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative, the House dividing as follows:—

Ayes: Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, Hon. G. A. CLARKE, Hon. A. P. WOOD, Hon. R. FARLEY, Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, Hon. N. A. LYNCH, Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, Hon. H. F. LASHLEY, Mr. D. T. GILL, Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE, Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, His Honour J. M. EDGHILL and Mr. D. CARTER – 20

Noes: Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON and Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN – 2

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 8.30 p.m.

Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that.

The question that the House do now suspend was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.
7. 35 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

ORDER NO. 11 – THE FINAL APPROPRIATION BILL, 2002

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to move the Second Reading of the Final Appropriation Bill, 2002. Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, we are required at the close of each financial year to bring this Bill which essentially aggregates the Supplementaries which have been approved by this Parliament by way of Resolutions during the course of the year.

This Bill, therefore, relates to the Financial Year ending March 31, 2002, and it provides for a grant from the Consolidated Fund of \$148,422,004. That represents the sum of the Supplementaries which would have been passed during the course of the year. The Schedule is made for easy reference for Members and the Heads under which those Supplementaries would have been approved during the course of the year.

Sir, these matters have already been debated during the course of their approval at that stage of the individual

Supplementary Resolution. Sir, I do not propose to repeat what has gone on already in the course of these debates.

It is, therefore, for me to ask that this Final Appropriation Bill in respect of the many Resolutions for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2002, in the sum of \$148 422 004 be read a second time.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Bill be read a second time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 4 were called and passed

The Schedule was called.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to move that the Schedule be the Schedule to the Bill, Sir.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Final Appropriation Bill, 2002.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, we have come to the end of Government Business for the day. I want to thank all persons, particularly the members of staff of Parliament for facilitating us with this business. Sir, as you are aware, we met twice this week and, therefore, I know that those persons would have to work harder than usual this week in servicing the business of Parliament, and the Other Place would have met once as well.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned until Tuesday, June 11, 2002, at 11 o'clock in the morning.

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

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

8.35 p.m.

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