
THE

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

RESUMPTION

MR. SPEAKER: This House is now resumed. The Honourable Member for St. John. May I remind this House that the Honourable Member for St. John has 2 hours, 33 minutes. That is the length of television time taken by the Right Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, it was John F. Kennedy who said that economic policy could result from governmental inaction as well as governmental action. Therefore, I wish to start my reply to these Budgetary Proposals and Financial Statement this year, by asking you to picture an amazing scene with me.

We have the Minister of Finance, in bath trunks at the end of a jetty, let us say at Port St. Charles in the Honourable Member's constituency. There are five or six persons who are in the sea. They are in difficulty and are appearing set to succumb. They are clearly not able to help themselves and so they appeal to the Minister for help. As they shout in desperation for help, the Minister shouts back, don't worry, I am stationing a few lifeguards out here next week.

Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the citizens of Barbados were asking when was Budget Day. They wanted to know when was the appointed time when the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance would stand before the people of this country and, in the tradition of his predecessors to that office, address the issues that concerned them and would offer them some salvation.

Sir, over the past forty years, the people have waited on Budget Day to hear from previous Minister of Finance - Errol Barrow, Tom Adams, the then Bernard St. John, Dr. Richie Haynes, the then Erskine Sandiford, and David

Thompson. They look for two messages from a Budget, first an awareness of and a sensitivity to the matters that worry them. Secondly, a plan of action to address and redress those challenges and problems.

Sir, it was in that fine tradition that those who still showed any interest in this event, sat before their televisions yesterday and tried as best as they could have, to follow the presentation of the Minister of Finance. I thought I, alone, was lost after the first four or five minutes. Then after it all ended, as I walked down the steps, I was stunned when one of the few persons who had turned up in Parliament Yard, with a very straight face asked me: "Boss man, when is the Budget?" Sir, at first I thought this gentleman was being funny or had suffered from a mental lapse but as time went by and I spoke to scores of other individuals, I realised how few, if any, had a grasp or had understood anything of what the Minister of Finance said yesterday. To the vast majority of Barbadians what was presented yesterday was not a Budget but a mass of tangled incoherent words, obviously put together by different individuals - I mean no offence to the Minister or his scribes - but this particular presentation was as disjointed and as wooden as it was lacking in appeal and in focus.

Sir, my advice to the Minister of Finance is that, in future, the Minister should share his proposed measures with the person or persons who writes or write the remainder of the document, especially pertaining to the objectives. The script was poorly written and conceived, the language was wooden and empty and the stated objectives did not mesh with the announced policies. It was if there were two individuals, with complete different perspectives, who put pen to paper and then the Minister used a piece of scotch tape to bind the two documents together.

Mr. Speaker, there was no correlation between what the Minister said he wanted to achieve and the measures that he outlined in order to achieve them. The Prime Minister said that he wanted to go south but the measures

that he outlined pointed to the west. Sir, never before have so many people been left waiting for a neighbour or the following day's newspaper to explain to them what was contained in the Budget.

Mr. Speaker, few persons understood anything of which the Minister said yesterday, for little of it had any appeal or interest to them. Therefore, when I reflect on the Financial Statement which was delivered in this Honourable House for 2 hours, 30 minutes, yesterday, I constantly see that scene recurring before my eyes of the Minister standing on the jetty and assuring the drowning individuals in the sea, of the planned posting of lifeguards.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados have real and serious challenges with which to deal. Many of them are still trying to cope with the effects of recession. Some of them have succumbed to the pressures and their lives have been or are being destroyed by the debts that they have, the cost of living, health challenges and poverty.

Sir, smiling throughout his presentation, the Minister of Finance then comes before them on television and tells them that, notwithstanding their sufferings, help will come, but not now, but in the year 2004, 2005, 2006 or 2016, depending on who they are, of course.

As usual, the Government has already given significant concessions to those who are most important to them, again promising, a trickle-down effect where those at the bottom would soon, at some time in the future, receive benefits along the way.

Sir, the Government's inaction in relation to those who most need help in Barbados is not an oversight. It is, as John F. Kennedy said, a deliberate economic policy, and I am going to explain how in this presentation.

Sir, yesterday's Budget was described by one who should know better by training, a member of the Barbados Labour Party, as just the prescription the patient needed. The real problem is that the patient is dying on the table, a doctor is passing by and is writing a prescription but the medicine would not be available until next week.

Sir, that is not strange in Barbados when we have regards to what happens in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and in many of our health institutions, so that when one is sick and needs attention, doctors might pass by for hours in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and one might never get a prescription. There might be all kinds of other challenges to face to solve basic health problems in this country. Sir, but the approach of a Minister of Finance, seeing the patient on the table gasping for breath and begging for assistance while he writes the prescription which takes effect at some time in the future, is very strange.

Something should have prompted this Government to understand that Barbadians need action now on the economic challenges that they face. The Honourable Member for St. Peter is able to deny and even ignore the cries for help, preferring instead to believe his own propaganda about low unemployment, the resumption in the economic growth or the appropriateness of his economic strategy. These all point to a Government which is out of touch or perhaps a Government that is watching an election clock that is ticking much slower than we all think.

Therefore, yesterday was not the Minister of Finance's finest hour. I have witnessed his previous Budgets and have found this one to be a dress rehearsal. We have been told that the Honourable Minister has been extremely busy over the past two weeks, preparing for this important and vital event. We were forewarned that it would herald the sum total of the energies and the abilities of the social partners.

Last week the House cleared the items on the Order Paper and a series of emergency measures that had been announced since August 2001, then repeated in October, 2001 Sir, fourteen months later, this House was rushing to have those matters completed so that when we came to his Budget, it would look as though everything has been implemented and that no one could have complained about the slow pace of the implementation of Government's policies.

Sir, almost twelve months after the emergency package - and that word emergency seems to have absolutely no meaning in the context of what has been happening in relation to Government's ability to implement basic policies that were announced in Parliament, whether they were to set up new institutions, funds, make facilities available, or whatever.

4.10 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, the country was put on hold for a few days in anticipation of this seminal economic event and, Sir, what has emerged from that, to my mind, is unworthy of the ability of the Honourable Member for St. Peter, totally unworthy.

Sir, as I left the Chamber, I overheard a reporter being told by a very strong supporter of the Government that he could not say whether he liked the Budget or not because he had to study it. Now, on previous occasions the same gentleman, who is an ardent and avid supporter, and rightly so, would be out there jumping in glee because he understood clearly but on this occasion he did not have a clue. He was not sure what had happened, or whether

anything would happen because for him the Minister of Finance was not speaking English.

Sir, this leaves me to carry out a comparative analysis of the motivation of previous Ministers of Finance with the one who presides over our destiny. We have had seven Ministers of Finance since our Independence, all of them have led challenges as Ministers of Finance. All of them have led political parties at some point in their political careers. The current Minister has as his claim to fame in the Barbados Labour Party the fact that he did not possess, like many of the other Ministers of Finance, a middle class background or orientation and therefore had a peculiar understanding, appreciation and empathy, they said, for the plight of the poor and marginalised in Barbados.

Sir, he had special and unique qualities which the previous Ministers of Finance in Barbados never possessed to understand what was going on in the minds of the average Barbadian, who wanted to get ahead in life, who wanted to have a reasonably comfortable living, who wanted to be able to plan their lives as the private sector, with all the legislation that we pass and the other facilitation we do for them, can plan their businesses.

Sir, that was the advantage that we were told the Honourable Member for St. Peter possessed in relation to the politics and economics of Barbados. The strange thing is, that no one was ever in any doubt in relation to the previous Ministers of Finance, who they were listening to.

In a sense, the previous Budgets were somewhat predictable. Analysts, shopkeepers, policemen and journalists were all able to sense what was coming. The man on the Speightown, Rendezvous, Ellerton or Clifton Hall bus had a sense of what he expected of a Minister of Finance at a given point in history. He had a sense that taxation is now crippling him and he suspected that the Minister of Finance was going to come with some relief. He also would have known that things were tight and the Minister does not have a lot of room to manoeuvre. There is a sense in which people are able to anticipate and understand what is going to come from a Budget presentation.

Sir, then you would as other analysts like the late Wendell McClean, a distinguished economist, and others who would describe the challenges and then suggest, once the Budget was over, why a particular policy that they felt was necessary did not go far enough. In a sense we always had a grip and an idea, as Barbadians, of the direction that a Minister of Finance was likely to take in a particular Budget.

Sir, the public opinion built up and previous Ministers of Finance had a sense of what was intolerable.

The intolerable burdens that Barbadians faced and they knew when those burdens needed to be lifted, and sometimes the circumstances did not warrant it but the society knew that those burdens needed to be lifted. Where the circumstances permitted it, those burdens were often lifted.

Sir, with the Honourable Member for St. Peter, I must say that his objective appears to prove that you can totally ignore the needs and desires of ordinary Barbadians. The goal of the Minister appears to be one where he can succeed in not dealing with any of the issues that the pundits believe that he should deal with. What the Minister does not realise is, that the expectation of the pundits often mirror the expectation of the average Barbadian and the society. They mirror the expectations of the society and, therefore, when the Minister of Finance, for example, refuses to consider the lowering of the Value Added Tax, he is merely telling Barbadians that it does not matter what they want because I, as Minister, call the shots and I alone know what is necessary for this country.

Sir, I know that there are many parrot-like individuals on the other side, who are going to dutifully stand up in this Honourable Chamber and describe this as the greatest piece of economic wizardry ever in the history of the Barbados economy. We have heard this in every Budget since 1994 ad nauseam. Sir, the truth is, if you were to ask them to vote in a secret ballot, they would not be able to support the package and I want to tell you why, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, it is good to hear the Honourable Member for Christ Church West because I believe that the Minister would have reposed his confidence in the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, along with the other three retiring Honourable Members on that side, for guidance and assistance in the preparation of this package.

I cannot see the Honourable Members for Christ Church West, Christ Church South and St. Joseph approving such a package in these hard times unless are oblivious to the hardship currently in Barbados. Surely, they would have told the Minister of Finance that he is being very abstract and unresponsive to the cries of Barbadians.

Failing that, the Minister of Finance would have delayed the Budget presentation by two weeks and run some of those ideas by his Party colleagues at his Party conference which is set for the coming weekend. I am certain that they, ordinary grassroots members and supporters of the Barbados Labour Party, would have advised him to 'wheel and come again'. They would have told him that he is being too abstract and that, few if any, measures that he was proposing to deal with, bear any

resemblance to what the man in the street was talking about or yearning for or want action on.

Thirdly, the Minister of Finance could have got into his car - I confess that he has been here more often this year than he was last year.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, he could have gone to the industrial sites in Barbados. He could have visited furnituring and other manufacturing plants. He could have dropped in at a few West and South Coast hotels, north coast establishments or some of the restaurants at Holetown and St. Lawrence, and what he could have done is ask the proprietors and the workers what the Honourable Member for St. Peter was contemplating.

Sir, I distinctly remember, last year, pointing out to members on that side that the restaurants on the West Coast of Barbados were facing the hardest times that they had faced in a long time. Sir, what the Honourable Member could have found out, is whether his proposals were viewed by those persons as relevant and helpful to the plight that they were facing.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance did no such thing. He called together the members of the extended 'How Great Thou Art Choir', known otherwise as the Social Partners of Barbados, and agreed with them on a few cosmetic changes that would be articulated. Sir, I have to be very careful in these presentations because there is such a wide gulf between what the Minister of Finance said in Budgets and what actually happens after those Budgets.

Sir, I just gave you an example. Fourteen months after a Budget in August 2001, this Parliament was now implementing measures, and there is a long list of failed pledges in that regard.

Sir, then what we had were some tinkering and some tinkering and some cosmetic changes which were articulated, not implemented - for the implementation of these is a totally different matter - which I am going to deal with in a little while.

Sir, when the Minister met with those individuals, once those individuals were satisfied with what he intended, he proceeded to Parliament. I hope that he consulted his elders in his Party.

It is therefore no wonder that the only persons glowing in their tributes for this packages were selected private sector leaders.

I will say this, though, I said it before and I am going to say it again, because as a public official I do not turn

anybody back. I welcome any advice or suggestions but I find it difficult, year after year, that three months after a Budget, people can be 'licking down' the door of my office, asking me to pressure the Government into implementing policies that they said were terrific and forward-looking.

Sir, it happens that people want the Opposition to pressure the Government to implement the policies that the Government said in its Budget that it is going to implement.

Sir, the predictability with which the private sector representatives respond to the Honourable Member's Budget has been fascinating. There has not been a single Budget in the past eight years that has not had a resoundingly favourable response from the Social Partners, the leaders and their satellites. "The last Budget was the boldest and most forward-looking ever", I saw those words in an editorial today. Meanwhile, if you take up the Budget, the Minister of Finance made it clear that all of these policies for the productive sector, except in two areas, have basically failed, and I will deal with that too.

Sir, a few handouts here and an institution or two thrown at a problem there, have been the stock-in-trade of this Minister in every Budget. That is tough because the Honourable Member for St. Peter, when he was on this side, meaning in the Opposition, used to say to me and to other Ministers of Finance that he did not believe in throwing institutions at problems, nor throwing money at problems. Those were two elements of his economic credo he often spoke about in those days.

The real problem with this Budget is that three months later, members of the Social Partnership then chided the Opposition for failing to pressure the Government into implementing praiseworthy measures announced in the Budget but which do not get implemented for three or four years. Yet, the private sector spokespersons fall for this every year.

Therefore, I have to wonder if the Minister is not often innocently misled when we are talking about the centres of influence in Barbados. I am not talking about centres of political influence. I am not talking about a Party Headquarters or a Government Headquarters. I am extending those centers way beyond that to the real centres that have an impact on influencing policies in this country. Therefore, that defines all persons, who are afraid or reluctant to look the Prime Minister in the eye and tell him that what he is doing is not right and does not make sense.

Sir, we have a strong fear factor in Barbados in which people are so frightened to say what they honestly feel and are so terrified of the repercussions, real or

imagined, that they refuse to tell the Minister of Finance anything that they think the Minister will not appreciate.

Sir, legendary is the economic conferences which were held at Sherbourne, I did not go them and I could not rely on second-hand information, although hearsay is never a desirable point of reference. Many of the private sector people were terrified to say anything that they genuinely felt, for fear that their businesses would suffer in one way or another.

Sir, if these fears are real, and they are also imagined, but the point is, Sir, they exist. If members, both on the other side and some members of the Social Partnership, had the courage of their convictions to say that they felt that something was wrong when it was wrong - then, perhaps, we would not be facing the crisis in agriculture that we are currently facing today - and state directly to the Minister of Finance that these are the reforms that we think we need to implement and this is the timetable for the implementation.

Sir, I am surprised that the Minister of Agriculture would get upset when I say what I say. The Agricultural Development Trust, or whatever it is called, had the longest gestation period in the history of any institution in Barbados. The difference in time between when it was announced and when it came onstream is a record.

The Minister of Agriculture may tell me that the Minister of Finance is to be blamed for that. I hope that he would not say so because there was a time when the Minister of Finance was able to take the entire sugar industry, put in new institutional arrangements and respond to the need for restructuring of that industry in an orderly way. Not with the agronomist, not with people from the Minister of Agriculture, directly some of them had an impact but with a team of individuals of different talents and abilities whose overriding obligation was to meet a timetable of reform. This Government does not have a timetable for anything.

Sir, the word shortly means in a Budget means from one to four years. Some Bills that were promised that were promised in 1988 have not even been first-read in this House. Some Bills in terms of financial reform. - last we got, the Fair Trading Commission - those Bill and the other Bills. Those things require leadership, they require a serious task force of professions and public officers to sit down and set time-frames and have policies implemented. Sir, there is a complete absence of that.

Therefore, the absence of this frankness and objectivity on matters of concern that Social Partners represent, has created a situation where many of them are losing credibility in the eyes of the public as a result of their desire to stay in the good graces of the Minister of

Finance rather than act in the interest of the people who they represent; whether they are elected, selected or by whatever method they come to the table of the Social Partnership.

Sir, once they get a fair percentage of what their organisation wanted, then all is well and it does not matter if the remaining 98 per cent of Barbados get nothing as long as they get it.

4.30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I believe that every farmer, hotel owner, restaurant owner, vendor and every person working in the offshore sector must understand that when a Minister of Finance increases disposable income in this economy, all of them are going to benefit.

Sir, I heard people talking about concessions to a sector but I do not live in a sector. I live in Barbados and what I do impacts on every area of life in this country. I have children going to school, elderly grandparents and parents and all kinds of things that afflict normal people, afflict me as well.

I do not function on the basis of whether lawyers are getting an increase in fees and, therefore, a Budget is good if it increases legal fees and it is bad if it does not.

I would rather look at it from the other end. If the Minister of Finance increases the disposable income of people at the bottom and middle of the economic ladder, professionals at all levels would benefit in this country. If you can free them from the burden of taxation, people at all levels in Barbados would be able to benefit.

If they have more disposable income, they would be able to buy into the 100 Per Cent Bajan campaign, but you could have three thousand 100 Per Cent Bajan campaigns, if you do not have money, you cannot buy the goods. If the goods are slightly more expensive than what is imported and they do not have the money, they are going to buy the goods that are imported. Those are basic simple rules of human behaviour.

Sir, as I said, I do not live in a sector, so I am not waiting for the President of the Bar Association or the Bishop of the Anglian Church, of which I am a member, the headmaster of any of the schools that my children go to or any of those persons to tell me that this is a good or bad Budget.

Sir, part of the problem in Barbados is that the credibility of representatives of areas in the social partnership is being diminished by their inability to see the

whole picture, and their inability to see how people at the bottom rungs of the economy in this country need to be eased from the burdens that they are facing. They need to be frank in their discourse about the Government in that regard.

Sir, once their sector gets something, oh, we are happy to see that the Prime Minister focussed on this area and, therefore, the Budget is a terrific Budget because he did that, so even if it gouges you in the eye with taxes and it has all kinds of other deleterious impacts on the economy, as long their focus is on tourism, agriculture or the business enterprise, they are in and if that enterprise gets something, then at the end of the day, they are satisfied.

If they were being frank and objective though, Sir, they would let the public know how many of the bold initiatives for the economic sectors, which were heralded in previous Budgets, remain unimplemented or stagnant. They would hold up a list to the Minister of Finance, when they meet with him and say, look Minister, in 1998 you promised an Agricultural Development Trust, four years later we are still waiting to feel its impact in our sector, if not welcome its birth. They would be frank enough to do that, Sir.

A Small Hotels Investment Fund was promised. They are still waiting to feel its impact in the Barbados economy.

A Public Service Vehicle Cooperative was to be established since from as far back as 1998, Sir, along with an insurance company for public service vehicle operators. I want to know if they had been inspired by that Budget in 1998 to do anything.

A Securities Act was to be shortly introduced in Parliament, and those were the words, but no one in the industry can give me an update on the status of the regulations.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Not the Act, Sir, the implementation.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would not want the Honourable Member of the Opposition to mislead himself, far less the public of Barbados. In the circumstances, I have a responsibility to this Parliament to indicate that not only did I certify the regulations as fit for passing, but they were signed by both the Minister of Finance and the Securities Commission. The Securities Act and the Securities Regulations are all in place.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, it would have been most appreciative if the Minister who just got up was able to tell this country that as a result of the passage of that Act back in 1998, and as a result of her certification, that it had some dramatic impact on the Stock Exchange in Barbados or anywhere else in the world.

This is the point that I am making. In the 2000 Budget, Sir, we were promised the phased liberalisation of telecommunications which, by the year 2002, would result in competition in the sector. Sir, tell me to what extent we have real competition in the telecommunications sector in Barbados in the year 2002. This was heralded as a terrific initiative by this Government, but we are still waiting for the impact of that competition to be felt in the Barbados economy.

We were told that there would be an Employment Protection Bill to protect workers from unfair employment practices. In fact, we were told about that from as far as, I think, 1996. We went into an election of it being promised. A Select Committee of Parliament was set up and herein started. Sir, the Bill has not been passed. The Select Committee has not reported. In fact, it got an extension and that was since the year 2000. This impacts on workers in Barbados.

We were promised a new Pension Benefits Bill, shortly. Has that materialised?

An Innovations Fund was promised to be operationalised shortly, in the year 2000. Sir, \$5 million were promised to the manufacturing sector to make them export ready.

A debate was held in here just a week ago and the impact of these measures has not yet been felt in the manufacturing sector. These measures were not only forgotten but they are only now getting attention to keep the manufacturing sector quiet.

The Honourable Member said last week that because \$5 million has not been made available, \$1 million had come on stream from another source. I think he said it was from the Social Investment Fund or some other fund, and put into that Fund so that the measure could get underway at the earliest possible time.

There was to be a consolidation of all lotteries. This has not yet happened.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: The terms which the Minister of Finance indicated for the consolidation of the lotteries have not yet fully materialised.

If the Minister wants me to accoutre in the type of language he used yesterday, Sir, I can do that, so that at the end of the day nobody would understand what I am saying and, like Honourable Members on that side, I would be able to wriggle out of the problem. Sir, that consolidation did not start, as promised, in 2000.

Aside.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: We were hearing about that from before the year 2000.

Sir, you can go through the list of those Budgets, but this has been a very sad record of the Prime Minister's Government. On this occasion, I am going to let him partly off the hook because the Prime Minister has the largest Cabinet ever in the history of Barbados, and they say, with the most talented persons ever assembled both on the Frontbench and on the Backbench.

Asides.

4.40 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yet when you reflect on the ability of past Governments which they would probably say had less talent, a public service which was smaller and with antediluvian techniques of public administrations, they were still able to advance this country to the point where they could implement free secondary education almost overnight but today we are struggling to get an EduTech programme going. That programme has moved from EduTech 2000 to EduTech 2020 and every year you keep hearing that more money is going to be spent on it.

Sir, this is the boldest, the most innovative, the brightest and the most creative and varied talented Government ever assembled in the history of Barbados. If only the people could feel the effects of those boasts, not only during the Budget but in the times in between those Budgets, I believe the vast majority of Barbadians would be happy.

Sir, in these Budgets anything can be said. The language can be flowery and you can promise anything. Whether it is implemented or not or how long it takes to implement it, is irrelevant. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, since there is no schedule medium term economic framework published anywhere that you can point to and say well by this date we expect that to be in place, Ministers can come in here and waffle. Outside of Budget time nobody keeps them to any accountable time frame so measures can fall off the table and never be implemented and legislation that is a priority can take forever to get here despite the fact that the Government set up a unit with consultants some years

ago to fast-track legislation. But nobody holds the Government accountable to any of these things and, of course, the Government does not feel that it is accountable not just in that area but I am going to get to some other areas as well.

It is true, Sir, that the Honourable Member for St. Peter never promised to fast-track everything. He was very limited in the things that he said he will fast-track in Barbados. He was very specific about the things he said he will not place any stumbling blocks or stones in their way. There are many things in this country that would need somebody to remove the stumbling blocks and to fast-track so that they can be effectively implemented on the behalf of the people of this country.

What the Minister did say in relation to the cry of Barbadians for relief is that it is important to get the economy to perform so that the beneficiaries, the poor and the disadvantaged, can be helped. That means, in very simple Bajan language, that you have to wait until the economic sectors are performing, even if there are my policies that are retarding them, before the benefits can trickle down to you.

In yesterday's Budget the Minister of Finance said it quite eloquently, I will quote him, Sir.

"Mr. Speaker, there is always a tendency to dismiss the seriousness of a policy focus and orientation such as I have just specified as having nothing to do with the small man or about the eradication of poverty. But the interest of the small man and the eradication of poverty are all bound up in how we generate first of all more production and output, how we make ourselves more competitive in the global economy and how we create more sustainable jobs to afford people more sustainable livelihoods."

But, Sir, at the end of the day nothing trickles down. When the economy is growing and the Government is raking in the VAT and so on, the Government takes that money and squanders it, and we will get to that shortly, Sir. If the ideas in this Budget are to put money into the pockets of Barbadians, perhaps we should see how successful the Minister had been in that regard. I will get to that very shortly when we discussed the Gems Project, the Urban Development Commission (UDC), the National Housing Corporation Project at Warrens, the St. Leonard's Secondary School, Greenland Landfill, Southern Meats and a host of other unnecessary and wasteful expenditures that have lined the pockets of a few at the expense of the majority. That money cascaded into the pockets of those individuals.

Before I get to that though, I believe I need to say a word or two about the issue of economic planning in Barbados. The entire world has been facing an economic

crisis in the past two years. The uncertainty, panic, distrust and economic ruin that has characterised many previously stable economies has impacted on small islands like Barbados. Any time you turn on your television to CNN, you will see the topsy-turvy, unsettled nature of the markets. Four economists have expressed different views, not that that is unusual but I think the variety of their opinions is, on the future of the world economy, large international institutions and they came up with different perspectives on growth and all of the other challenges that are faced by terrorism, health threats and so on.

This is an uncertain world in which there is a lot of panic. Fortunately, we in Barbados are able sometimes to isolate ourselves from it because of the way in which we live our lives but we have Barbadians living all over the world who cannot open their curtains, put gas in their cars or cannot go to work in New York City feeling comfortable because of the fear of a sniper attack. These are the realities, Sir, of living in the world 2002, that has an impact on the way people spend their money, what they do and how they feel.

Sir, there was a Budget in August 2001. Shortly thereafter, the country was thrown into a by-election so I called that Budget a by-election Budget. During the by-election, I warned Barbadians not only that it was a by-election Budget but that reputable economic journalists, and this is prior to September 11, were saying that the Barbados economy was not as resilient as the Government was suggesting. So every night in St. Thomas, Honourable Members of the Government demonised not just me but the writers of those documents. They said all they do is read editorials. Well, they could not have read editorials in Barbados because I have not yet read an editorial in this country since 1994, except maybe one or two, that have not taken this Government to task seriously for the state of the economy. So they were not reading editorials in Barbados. Honourable Members on that side said they just gather anecdotal information and put it together but that anecdotal information turned out to be very, very correct.

Right after the by-election - not because of September 11 because that had not even kick in to its full extent and if we are to believe the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, September 11 did not even have the impact that people were saying it would have, in fact, it did not even have half the impact that was anticipated that it would have had, so September 11 is not as big an issue as was being made out at the time, fortunately so - there was a Budget which was followed by the September 11 disaster which then led to an emergency economic consultation.

The highlight of that consultation was that the Government should go to the capital markets to borrow \$300 million to put aside so that we could stave off the impact of September 11 and the impact of trade

liberalisation. To the Government's credit that was the fastest measure they implemented. They got to the markets so fast and got that money into Barbados so fast that one wonders why it is that they are still not able to get some of the other basic measures to sustain the Barbados economy implemented.

4.50 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, some measures in that August 2001 Budget and the Emergency Economic package which were predicated on a process which was designed to help Barbados earn its way - not borrow its way - out of the economic crisis, took longer than fourteen months to implement.

Sir, as I said, not only last week was a mad rush to get some measures put in place but when one looks at the context in which these things are being said, the Government does not come back and report to the people of Barbados on the progress of the implementation of these measures.

Mr. Speaker, when last was a report done that would have measured the impact of the August 2001 Budget or even prior to that, the measures that were put in place from as far back as 1998, to design a brand new Barbados? Therefore, Sir, many things that have been said yesterday would have been said for effect. They look nice on paper, they sound nice internationally, they send out the right and appropriate signals about the direction for the Barbados economy but they have no connection to the reality of the average Barbadian who is living in rural Barbados and who is sitting watching television.

Yesterday there was not a single problem identified by the Minister which was not an issue five months ago or even two years ago. The businesses in the agricultural sector that have failed were crying out for help more than a year ago. Since then many of them have collapsed. The pig farmers have gone out of business. Poultry farmers have been decimated and the statistics are staggering. Sir, these are not my statistics, I have taken them directly from the Budget that was presented yesterday.

Sir, the Minister of Finance said, and I quote: "Pork production in Barbados declined significantly from

2 795 400 kilograms in 1997 to 1 402 500 kilograms in 2002 and continues to decline."

Sir, that was the decline from 1997 right through to 2002. That decline has taken place, despite the emergency economic measures that were introduced last year. Those measures were to halt the decline, to stabilise the economy,

to stabilise industries or to protect local production. Those measures have all failed, in other words. Sir, how is it possible to raise production when so many producers in Barbados have already been wiped out? Mr. Speaker, the main beneficiaries of what the Minister of Finance said yesterday are the ones remaining.

The Minister of Finance clearly does not understand what simple backyard pig farming has meant for thousands of households in this country and, for several years now, small pig farmers have been reeling under pressure and under unfair competition. They have been getting conflicting signals from the Ministry of Agriculture such as, backyard slaughtering must stop; the Ministry of Health saying something else; a moratorium put in place; the abattoir closed down; money pumped into Southern Meats; Southern Meats collapse and closed down; Southern Meats reopens; Six Road Abattoir remains open. Sir, it is a total mess of economic and institutional policies, to expect that anybody involved in agriculture could function in such an environment where there are no policies at all.

Therefore, when a Minister of Finance comes and announces that he has \$500 000 available to get pork production up to nearly two million kilograms, I had to ask where is the Minister living. If the Minister is relying on the statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture, he should throw them away because they have done more to create a situation of uncertainty, distress and destruction in that industry than anything else. Yet, Sir, we are hearing that money would be given and the assurance is that pork production will get back to two million kilograms if \$500 000 and \$1.8 million are given to them. Mr. Speaker, that has never happened before and it would be a miracle. I wait to see that miracle materialised.

Mr. Speaker, many of these farmers were forced out of business. Their families have suffered and have paid the price and now that they are drowning in debt and in the destruction of their businesses, the Minister of Finance is saying that next week he is going to increase the number of lifeguards, so that the assistance now being offered would only assist the big producers who remain. Those businesses have successfully weathered the turbulent times and have already stood the test, so therefore, to them, it really does not matter whether or not Government intervenes at this point. The real casualties in this area, particularly when one speaks of pork and chicken production, are the hundreds of small and medium size producers who have had to close their farms and who have had to sell off their stock because they could not carry their burdens any further.

Sir, since I see no evidence to the contrary, I am yet to be convinced that their demise was not planned or was not deliberate. Sir, as I said, John F. Kennedy said: "Inaction is just as much an economic policy as action." Where a Minister sits idly by and see that level of decline -

which did not start in September 11th, 2001 but in 1997 by the Minister of Finance's own statement yesterday - today we would have the industry being controlled by a handful. The assistance to this sector is, I insist, too little, too late, and is a tragedy for Barbados.

Sir, yesterday the Minister of Finance said, and I quote: "The implementation of trade liberalisation since April, 2000, has resulted in increased hardship on the poultry industry. Analyses have shown that even with the bound rates and the special safeguard mechanism, the importation of chicken leg quarters threatens to destroy the local industry. Similarly, marked increases in the importation of turkey wings, despite the 70 per cent duty, has had a negative effect on the local industry."

Mr. Speaker, when we had criticised the Emergency Economic Package and the last Budget in August as being totally out of touch with reality, we were essentially predicting these kinds of outcomes. The Minister of Finance did not heed our advice and took a turn in the Opposition as he had wanted and is entitled so to do. This is a democracy and apparently anything could be said on certain occasions. Sir, in that regard, instead of listening to the frank advice from the Opposition, the Minister chose to ignore it. Yesterday the Prime Minister confessed that the measures had failed, then after more farmers would have drowned, the Minister comes standing on the jetty and promises them a lifeguard but not today but sometime next week.

Sir, let us look at export agriculture. This statistic was the one that completely stunned me. I quote: "Notwithstanding the apparent opportunities, fresh product exports from Barbados have declined dramatically. Data showed that fresh produce, cut flower and foliage plant export declined from 1.7 million pounds valued at \$1.7 million in 1996 to 77 000 value at \$145 000 in 2000."

5.00 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: The decline was registered before September 11th but declining exports were relevant for the past eight years and even before that time.

Sir, I confess that it was one of the biggest challenges the Democratic Labour Party faced when we had to look at how best to rationalize the operations of Barbados Agricultural Marketing Corporation and since 1994, Government itself dismantled almost all of the institutional arrangements that could have halted that decline.

Sir, we are now at the eleventh hour before the next elections and the economy is worse off than we were when

the Government took office in 1994. This is my final appeal both to the Minister and the Government as a whole, to state its policy on sugar. If the Government wants to close down the sugar factories, it should say so because two plantations are going to be taken out of sugar as a result of this Budget.

Sir, I live next to River Plantation which produced sugar ever since I lived there and it is going to be taken out of sugar. Bath is also coming out of sugar production. The Government took Bath Plantation out of sugar production and put it into the Land for Landless programme when for the last years we have been hearing that the Chinese and Japanese were coming to Barbados to make Bath Plantation into a golf course and a tourism facility.

Sir, we seem to be going in 12 difficult directions at the same time because I believe that to take Bath out of sugar production and put it into the Land for the Landless programme is a mistake.

Bath is in Scotland District and the way in which it has been haphazardly announced tells me that Government does not have a plan for the Scotland District. Government is simply navigating by light and, therefore, anything goes.

We need land for the landless farmers but I do not know how River and Bath plantations were chosen and the Government has not said what impact it would have on sugar production, employment or the economy.

One of the biggest problems we have in agriculture is that there are no markets for farmers to sell their produce. The agriculturalists tell us that the biggest challenge they face is not increasing levels of production but in finding markets for their produce and this is the particular challenge that the Ministry of Agriculture and the relevant authorities have to address.

Sir, the Minister of Finance could very well have abstract intentions to increase the level of agricultural production to make land available but there must, at some point, be a plan that tells us in so doing, that it is going to make a contribution to the economic development of Barbados and accompanying that will be a land use policy for this country.

Sir, we do not have a land use policy. What we have is an excuse for a land use policy because farmers recognise that it is more profitable to keep their land in bush even when they are given incentives.

Sir, the concession in relation to a property transfer tax is not going to have an impact unless the vast majority of leases are being registered. These leases are not currently being registered and, therefore, it means that there must be other policies that Government can come up with to

answer cries of persons who want access to land so that they can have a feel for agriculture on which they can sustain their families.

Sir, some people keep the land in bush and then tell the town planner that it is not good land, that it was always in bush. Some people even remove the top soil, carry the soil elsewhere and then get permission to subdivide the land and then sell it, at ten times what land was selling for in that area ten years before, for residential purposes.

Sir, as long as this can happen, nobody is going to go out there - other than altruistic members of the Rastafarian community, people who generally like agriculture, communing with nature, have a genuine commitment - and undertake any major agriculture enterprise in this country.

Sir, we cannot revitalise agriculture unless there is a clear policy on land use in this country. Government says it will revitalise the Scotland District but what about the availability of water? How are we going to address the issue of land slippage in the area? What crops are we going to plant in this area? The problems in that area are not because we have not tried because Barbadians have accessed land, unofficially, in that area and have tried a variety of crops.

Sir, in manufacturing the decline has been dramatic. Output fell by 8.4 per cent despite new measures and new funds. The Government passed the Credit Facility Fund, the Innovation Fund, the Industrial Fund, the Employment Fund, Fund Access, a fund for this and a fund for that was introduced over the past eight years.

Sir, have these new enterprises grown and employed more people or made a net contribution to Barbados as a result of the establishment of these funds?

We had a series of promises over the last year but the latest one was to establish a joint private and public sector trading and marketing enterprise. Sir, I cannot see any light at the end of the tunnel in relation to the manufacturing sector in Barbados and we need to do something to address that concern.

In the tourism sector the new watchword is "product development" and that is desirable because I have said to the Honourable Member for the City that Bridgetown is one of the dirtiest cities around.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I went to Namibia and saw a city that I could have practically eaten off the streets and at two o'clock in the morning, when you are going home from the disco, the workers are cleaning up the city to make sure that it remains pristine. It is a beautiful city

and people put their African art on the sidewalk without having to put down any tarpaulin.

The Honourable Member for the City speaks about immaculate lawns, grasses, flowers and beautiful buildings but I am talking about basic cleanliness and hygiene in our City, Sir.

This really concerns me because in the Caribbean and other economies like Cuba that have not done as well as ours and where a lot of the city is crumbling, there are still boulevards and parts of those cities are beautiful and pristine and people are proud so they do not throw litter through the window or that kind of thing.

Sir, if we are talking about product development, as well as spending \$150 000 on signage and those types of physical improvements, we have to change the attitudes of people toward their environment and educate them about maintaining the beauty of our natural environment and our city.

I hope the Minister of Tourism could answer this question because what really concerns me about product development is the fact that the existing product and enterprises are collapsing and I vividly recall last year pointing out the challenges faced by restaurants on the South and West Coast. At that time, I remember one parliamentary representative saying that I was dreaming when I said that I had been to a restaurant in Road View, St. Peter, one night and there were more members of staff in the restaurant than there were people sitting down to eat. Sir, we have to face the fact that restaurants on the West Coast and South Coast are suffering badly and I am not talking about the top-end restaurants but of a variety of them from replicas of rum shops, serving fried fish and chips to restaurants at the top-end of the market like the Cliff and Calabaza and, therefore, Sir, it is almost unbelievable that we can act as though this is not the case.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for the City is saying that in some restaurants you cannot even get a reservation. Is the Honourable Member living in Barbados? You may not be able to get a reservation in Washington, New York or London but in Barbados there is no difficulty in relation to restaurants on our West Coast. Sir, everyone knows that except the Honourable Member for the City.

I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael South lives in Barbados and, therefore, I am addressing this issue to him. I know the Honourable Member has appreciation for what is happening in the economy. He knows that people are being sent home from restaurants,

that they are losing their jobs and that most of the restaurants in this country are facing major challenges.

Sir, nothing has changed as a result of yesterday's business Budget for those businesses. We need to talk to the vendors, the artists, the taxi drivers, and find ordinary Barbadians who operate watersports facilities. If you meet with them, they will tell you the various challenges that they, as ordinary Barbadians making small investments in this economy, are facing as a result of the decline in tourism.

Sir, we should also make it a point to find out what has happened to the watersports operators in Barbados. People will say that we need to educate and train them. What, at the end of the day, are they taking home to their families? Can they comfortably maintain the motor car, the boat or the jet ski? Are they able to access tourists where they are because of the very restricted practices that are often employed? Those are the questions that would have to be asked if we are really interested in the advancement of people in this country.

Ask the bankers in Barbados how many vans, trucks and fishing boats are to be repossessed or are out of use in the past year-and-a-half. They will tell you that there is a lot of hardship in Barbados and that many people are not even able to make basic payments on their little truck or Suzuki van.

There are many fishermen who have boats hauled up and cannot repair them because they cannot access financing to do the repairs. Sir, these are the small industries to which we should address our attention.

Mr. Speaker, it is not just the Pierhead Project and other developments that are important to our economy but while this four-year project is to come on stream, there are some people in Barbados who are biting their nails every night wondering if a bailiff is going to come and take up their motor car, their van or whether they can pay their light bill or meet their basic obligations to their family in this society.

Sir, people need help now. They do not need talk nor the kind of things we were treated to yesterday. People need a budget that responds to the current needs of Barbados. They need a budget that takes their concerns into consideration, not promises about the year 2003, 2006 and 2060 but they need help now.

Sir, why then did we have to wait until October 2002 for this Budget? What was said yesterday that would change the reality for farmers, hoteliers, vendors or taxi drivers in Barbados? What was said yesterday that is going to excite new investment in this economy?

We are bailing out tourists who come to this island by subsidising their visit. We are making sure that they are not in debt when they go back home because we are paying part of the visit for them but Barbadians cannot even get the slightest assistance or subsidy despite the rubbish that you hear emanating from certain quarters about the magnanimous and equitable way in which the resources of the various commissions, like the Urban Development Commission in Barbados are being distributed among all who need.

Sir, as I have said, we are bailing out tourists to visit Barbados and giving them money to come here but we cannot bail out Bajans who live here. The guy who sees the bailiff tomorrow morning does not have anyone to bail him out and very often the circumstances that led to his personal crisis are as a result of the overall economic circumstances in this country.

5.20 p.m.

Tuesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I ask the question, who is going to bail out the many thousands of Barbadians who are in the informal sector, and in small businesses and in the tourism sector in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, we have our priorities mixed up and for many of them, anything we try to do now, is too little and too late.

We have many small business people in this country who perked up the minute they heard a Budget Day was coming. They were limping along, hopelessly and helplessly, not knowing when the end would come. Business is down, the banks are after them, they have a huge wages Bill and there is no one to whom they can turn because everybody else is facing the same problem.

Professionals who might have helped before cannot help now because they are in a tight economic squeeze. When people at that level are suffering, professions suffer also and we have to understand those interrelationships. They have nowhere to go.

The Government speaks in this Budget about the various windows of capital and investment funds which are being established but those windows seem closed to these small business people. Accessing the funds is a problem.

I did not say so, one of the most prominent business people in this country and a very strong and eloquent supporter of the Barbados Labour Party said so last night and it was reported in today's newspaper, that you cannot access the funds.

Sir, better than that, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South stood up in this Chamber last Tuesday and

said that because a fund is available does not mean that whosoever will can come and get money out of the fund. He said that even some of the businesses that are targeted to get money out of it, they neither have the expertise to access the funds, nor is their business in any condition to access the funds. I understand that point.

Sir, what is the point of the Fund? Is the Fund there only for those businesses that are already flourishing and have the expertises, the people who have the title and people who can back them, or is the Fund there to take businesses that are deficient and would not normally qualify and ensure that those businesses can access some of these resources? Sir, it is a vicious cycle out there.

Sir, I am always afraid to send people to access money from these funds. There is a lot of paper work and paper work itself has its virtue, Sir, but some of the demands that are made of them, and very often made of people who do not necessarily understand all the implications of what they are getting into, make it impossible for them to access those resources.

I have asked the Government in successive Budgets to find a way to hold the hands of these enterprises. Get them cleaned up in the way that would make them attractive to the funds and assist them along the process.

Sir, with business down, the banks after them, the huge wages Bill and all of these other challenges, many of these developmental agencies demand more collateral and securities than some of these poor businesses can provide.

Therefore, having heard of a Budget being delivered in October, they perked up expecting something would have been said to bring some relief and give impetus to their businesses in time for the Christmas period.

They heard the journalists, some politicians from this side, some analysts and other business persons outlining possible approaches that could have been taken to addressing their hardships. They therefore sat before their televisions last night, and waited. They waited during the first hour and nothing happened. The second hour nothing happened and thirty-five minutes into the third hour, they saw the Minister of Finance taking his seat and still nothing of relevance or appeal to them had been said.

Nothing was said about the fact that the so-called increase in tourist activity over the last three months, has not impacted on them in anyway, nothing about the skyrocketing price of food items and the corresponding reduction in the demand by consumers, nothing about the avenues for accessing meaningful and direct concessionary funding for their projects and their business ideas. All they heard and saw was stargazing on the part of the Minister of Finance.

He stopped short of telling them that nothing would be forthcoming in this Budget and if they wanted anything from him, they would only get it in the year 2004 which, of course, would be after the next general election. Members of this Government are now out in the field making their five-yearly rounds, known otherwise as canvassing. They are confronting these problems on a weekly basis and they too had been promising Barbadians that relief would come.

Aside.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: There are Honourable Members on that side who have been promising Barbadians that relief would come in this Budget, Sir, that is why I am looking forward to hearing what they are going to say, and how they are going to wriggle themselves out of this very awkward position. Clearly, this Budget was not a team effort. It did not reflect the desires of the team or the needs of their constituents.

There would have been no input from the Backbench. This Budget would have been the project of the Minister of Finance and the inner circle of that 'How Great Thou Art Choir'.

Aside.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: While, the Minister of Finance has been regaling us with the repetition of his exploits, at the end of his speech, in creating new institutions to throw at old problems and new funds in this area to throw at old initiatives, we almost forgot how badly the public expenditure has been managed in this country since 1996.

One of the reasons why the Minister has no elbow room to give more tax relief, comes from the way in which his Government has been spending and wasting money, and unless it stops, there would be no relief in the future. The fiscal deficit has already climbed to a level that the Minister said, is not sustainable. What does he propose to do about that?

There was a time when a shadow Minister of Finance, in preparing his reply could get a very clear picture of public expenditure management because most of Government's projects were provided for in the Estimates.

Off Budget expenditure, in other words, expenditure which may be incurred by Government through other entities, rather than central Government, as a percentage of Government's overall capital development strategy was very small.

Since 1994, Sir, we have seen a new phenomenon in Barbados. The Government has adopted two very clear and precise approaches to shifting public expenditure both from

Government's Budget and also from scrutiny and they have achieved both at the same time.

The first has been to establish private companies and the second has been to guarantee their debt or to make direct investments in them by equity.

What you have now in Barbados are many companies owned by the Government, either jointly or solely, which are undertaking massive projects without the scrutiny of this Parliament.

The Barbados Tourism Investment Corporation was the first to be converted into four or five private companies: Needhams Point Development Ltd., Southern Golf and Country Club, Barbados Tourism Inc., Horizon Event Planners and, Sir, possibly some others. Nobody really knows because a list has never been provided.

The National Conservation Commission created the Caves of Barbados Limited.

The Barbados Development Bank was converted into several private companies and funds: CRL Limited, Fund Access Limited, Enterprise Growth Fund Limited. And, Sir, in a sense, a spin-off from all of that would have been Hotel and Resorts Limited.

The Barbados National Bank and the Insurance Corporation of Barbados were privatised and converted into many private companies and there are many more.

5.30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There is nothing wrong with converting those companies. Many other countries in the Caribbean have adopted such strategies but legislation has been passed to bring those companies under the purview of Parliament. The fact that it has not been done in Barbados, despite a pledge made from as far back as 1998, tells me that this is a deliberate strategy by this Government to ensure that Parliament does not have scrutiny of those private companies. You can go right back to the first debate in here which was led by the Honourable Member for the City where we passed an Act which gave the Government of Barbados the authority to guarantee loans for private companies. You can go back and read that debate and see what the Honourable Members on that side said and what they promised in relation to accountability and then consider what has happened in many of those private companies since that time.

A good example of this is the GEMS Project which is established through a private company called Hotel and Resorts Limited. This is one example of the way in which

this Government has been able to hide from public scrutiny. It is a sign of genuine political arrogance that the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance sought to dismiss the GEMS Project yesterday as if it was just a commodity up for sale. We will sell it soon, is the Prime Minister's answer to the questions that have been asked, not by me. Those questions have now moved beyond me. Those questions are asked by the public. I presumed, Sir, that Senator Desmond Haynes will be very unhappy about that decision to sell Hotel and Resorts Limited.

The absolute indifference that is displayed by this Government in relation to the Gems Project is unrivalled and the way this Project has been conceived, managed and executed is typical of what is happening in our country. This GEMS Project was very dear to the Prime Minister's heart from the outset but the story of it is truly a saga. So we all owe a debt of gratitude to Senator Clyde Mascoll for his diligent research to bring this important matter before the public of Barbados. As the story of the GEMS Project unfolded in the media, even I who have been crusading against this squandermania was shocked at the depth of the mismanagement and the few who were benefiting at the expense of the taxpayers of this country.

The GEMS Project is the most glaring example of mismanagement and scandal in Barbados. This company was established on December 27, 1995, as a private limited company for the development of the GEMS of Barbados and it has a board of directors. The original concept is centred around a group of 13 hotels that were heavily indebted to the Barbados Development Bank, however, only three of them opted for the programme. They, therefore, acquired Eastry House, Andrea-On-The-Sea, Time Out, Blue Horizon and the Dover Convention Centre at a cost of \$27 million, giving the programme a potential of 611 rooms. According to the otherwise silent Chairman of Hotel and Resorts Limited, this is in his the Report, and I quote:

"The Government felt that the upgrading and expansion of the small hotel sector on the South Coast needed the support of both government and the private sector. The Government, as part of the enabling environment, established the Hotel Equity Investment Fund, the Enterprise Growth Fund and the Small Hotel Investment Fund in 1998, to provide equity capital and marketing support for this sector. In addition, during 1999, the Government established the Tourism Loan Fund to provide loans to the small hotel sector."

By December 1999 Silver Rock Hotel, which is owned by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, was added. Millions of dollars in taxpayers money has been squandered in this company but only two financial reports were made available to this House.

It is my view, Sir, that no publicly-owned company should be encouraged to go on and continue to go on without producing annual financial reports, which should be laid in Parliament. For the benefit of those persons who have been walking around giving the impression that documents which were made available to the Parliament are equivalent to documents being laid in Parliament, I suggest they familiarise themselves with an opinion written by the late distinguished Clerk of this Parliament, Mr. George Branner, who pointed out that there is a great difference between documents that are required to be laid in Parliament by way of legislation or otherwise and documents that are merely made available to this Parliament.

The Barbados Light and Power Company Limited produces an annual report and they make it available to this Parliament but that does not give the Public Accounts Committee the power to inquire into its operations. We can inquire into one of its shareholders, the National Insurance Board, but we have no power to inquire into the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited. It is the same thing with BARTEL and Hotel and Resorts Limited is in the same category. The Public Accounts Committee has no power even though the company is owned by Government to inquire into it.

Other Parliaments in the Caribbean including the Jamaican Parliament recognised this, maybe they had access to the same opinion that Mr. Branner had given, and therefore passed legislation making it clear that companies which Government guarantee either their debts or in which they own more than 25 per cent of the shares or in which they made a loan to the company, could be inquired into by the Public Accounts Committee. It would be ludicrous for the Public Accounts Committee to decide that it would want to inquire into the accounts of a company registered under the Companies Act of Barbados. If that were so, it means we could investigate any company, government-owned or not.

Therefore, I refute the very silly dare made by the Honourable Member for St. Peter to the Public Accounts Committee to investigate Hotels and Resorts Limited because he knows it cannot be done. CARSICOT was a private company and it could not have been investigated into by the Public Accounts Committee. The St. Joseph Hospital was established by an Act of Parliament and was required to lay documents in Parliament, that is why Parliament could have inquired into it. So that dare, the objective of which was to divert attention from the very salient points being made by Senator Mascoll about the manner in which this money was squandered, is nonsensical and absurd. So we would have had a debate about the Public Accounts Committee instead and all like now Barbadians would be diverted into a discussion about the Public Accounts Committee when millions more, and

there is going to be more spent, are going to be thrown behind bad money in the GEMS Project. No publicly-owned company should be allowed to continue like this.

The net effect of all the transactions is that the Government injected a total of \$142 million of which \$23 million was cash and the rest in the form of a loan guarantee to GEMS. To this amount you must add the yearly interest and principal payments of \$13.5 million and add to it the losses of \$4.6 million in 1998, \$10.4 million in 1999 and the conservative estimates of \$10 million for 2000 and 2001. These add up to \$35 million in losses over four years.

Senator Mascoll estimates that the cost of the GEMS Project to the taxpayers of Barbados is a whopping \$190.5 million. There are still some questions that remain unanswered. Who can explain why \$2.2 million was spent on renovating a derelict building at Eastry House in St. Peter or why was \$1.9 million used to renovate Dover Convention Centre in the same year in which it was demolished. I have to ask this. Have the other shareholders who constitute seven per cent of the ownership of the GEMS Project made a contribution which would be about \$308 000 towards the repayment of the principal and interest on the loans guaranteed by Hotel and Resorts Limited? Of course not.

5.40 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, they walked away from the transaction.

Sir, there are Members of this House who have had land bought from them at substantial amounts from Hotels and Resorts Limited - and the list of beneficiaries is unbelievable in terms of modern governance in this country.

Sir, every time that it comes up, the Honourable Member for St. Peter says that Mr. Phillip Greaves is a member of the board. So what? I did not appoint him. He is there in his own capacity, representing his family's interest. If you wish for me to give more details on who we are speaking of I can do so, including former members of Parliament. Sir, this is sickening. It is a sick episode in the history of this country. On top of that wastage, losses and mismanagement, Government is planning to inject more of one's hard-earned money into this project to make it viable for sale.

Yesterday we were treated to this statement by the Minister of Finance and I quote: "Mr. Speaker, it has never been the intention of the Government to enter into the hotel business but merely to salvage those heavily indebted

properties to the BDB. Hotel and Resorts Limited, trade name GEMS OF BARBADOS was formed in 1995, to purchase the hotel properties that were indebted to the BDB and to develop the Gems of Barbados project. Government owns 93 per cent of the share capital of the company, while two former hotel owners, the remaining 7 per cent. The company is highly geared, having been financed mainly by debt, Government is therefore preparing the company for divestment and has taken the first step by restructuring the debt in an effort to improve the debt to equity ratio."

Sir, in simple English what this means is that more taxpayers money is going to be put into the Gems Project to make it attractive for sale. The only way that debt could be restructured in that way is to convert it to equity. The most humorous aspect of yesterday's Budget were these words as spoken by the Prime Minister: "The privatisation of Gems of Barbados will be undertaken at the earliest opportunity."

Mr. Speaker, I recall only too well that the top black lawyer in the United States of America, Mr. Johnny Cochran was in Barbados a few years ago, if not months ago. He was wine and dined at a black tie affair and at other events. He was in the \$75 000 Gems Box at Kensington Oval for cricket. He was taken to the best golf courses in this country. What was it all in aid of? The public was told that he was here to help in the establishment of a lottery and to represent his client who is interested in purchasing the Gems Project.

Sir, we have heard nothing else about the Gems Project and one of these days, there might be a big story to tell about the lottery.

I also recall that, from the beginning, the Gems had private sector Canadian partners who were managing the project and who it was said, would eventually invest in it. These people left under a cloud of suspicion, with not one word from the Government as to the reason they left or as to what has happened.

I also recall the former Chief Executive Officer of Hotels and Resorts Limited was brought back to Barbados from Anguilla - I do not know why Senator Mascoll did not talk about the Anguilla connection when he was challenged by people who knew about it and if they want to talk about it could do so. I am not one of those persons because I am not into personalities. This is a Government company and the persons are, in a sense, public officers of Barbados - and was made a privatisation expert in the office of the Prime Minister, not of Anguilla, but of Barbados. He then went unceremoniously from that post to the top post in the Gems Project.

Sir, all that would have happened is the Gems of Barbados would have been converted into public wealth in people's pockets. Do Barbadians realise what could have been done with that \$190 million? Where would the QEH be now if it had that kind of money? The elderly at the Geriatric Hospital who have to share utensils, they have to wait until someone else finishes eating, then to share the knife, fork and plate. This happening in Barbados in the year 2002 and this Government has the luxury of throwing away \$190 million in a Gems Project. Sir, then the Government dismisses it as a commodity and say they are going to sell it as though it is a tin of milk on a shop shelf. The police, the teachers and the nurses could have been regraded and their salaries raised. All the tenantry roads in Barbados probably could have been completed and as the Minister of Housing has confessed, he could have built one thousand houses with that money that was spent on the Gems Project.

Sir, that point now brings me to the National Housing Corporation building at Warrens. This is another monumental scandal where millions of dollars have been spent and where the project has been ground to a halt. The accuracy of the figures is still to be determined. This is what the National Housing Corporation, being established to help poor people in this country get housing, had been reduced to. It has been reduced to concentrating its efforts on building glamorous buildings in Warrens, rather than meeting the needs of ordinary Barbadians by providing housing and land.

Sir, there is not one of us in here who does not have constituents who want land or housing. There are some constituents who even have the money to buy but cannot access the land or housing.

Sir, the National Insurance Funds have either been invested or are to be invested in both of the projects at Warrens and the Gems of Barbados.

Sir, the Pierhead Development Project is spinning in circles. This was once hailed as a major joint venture which was going to attract millions of dollars in foreign investment. The Government had given the project significant areas in the vicinity of Bridgetown as equity but strangely enough, we are now hearing the Government itself is going to get \$US35 million from the CDB for the project so that the marina could be built. Sir, why bother having a foreign partner unless that person is going to bring foreign investment? Are we providing the investment for a foreigner to come to Barbados? What madness am I hearing? This needs clarification before we have another Gems of Barbados or another Warrens on our hands.

Millions of dollars have been wasted on the Greenland Landfill, yet no one, nowhere, least of all the Honourable Member for the City, wants to tell the public

about the Greenland Landfill. Do you know how much could have been done with that \$30 million that was blown on the Greenland Landfill? This has implication for Expenditure management by Government. How could we let that situation get so out of hand? The \$30 million which was blown on the Greenland Landfill could have purchased new transport buses, built day nurseries, purchased resources for the police force in this country and could have ensured that our main road have proper surfaces, because we now have two-year old roads where, two years after they are fixed, they have to be refixed again. That is the standard of work that we are getting in Barbados today. Barbadian need to appreciate that every cent that is wasted or is stolen, is a cent less for social services, health and education.

Sir, everyone could have seen that something was wrong with the Eagle Hall Public Market. This Government waited until the market had finished for somebody to tell them something was wrong with it. I have not met anyone who did not ask me what was it the Government was building at Eagle Hall. Then there is a big picture on the front page of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, with handbag over her arm like Margaret Thatcher, walking through the market and giving out instructions and, therefore, more money will be spent in correcting errors that are made by this Government.

5.50 p.m.

Wednesday, November 23, 2002

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: The Minister said in 1998 that the original cost of EduTech 2000 was supposed to be \$350 million but by April 2001, Government said that it was revised to \$426 million. Would you believe that a few days ago Government is now saying that there will be an additional expenditure of \$76 million? Sir, what are we as a people getting for this money? Who is trying to fool us? Why is the Government trying to fool us? What checks and balances are in place to avoid somebody from building another house out of EduTech?

Where is the promised report of the auditors on Gas Works 2000? The National Petroleum Corporation is now about to start a new project but details of the old scandal needs to be provided. Why was the last General Manager fired or why did he leave? What did the auditors' report revealed?

What is the position with Southern Meats Limited? How much more is Government putting into Southern Meats Limited and what safeguards, if any, are in place to monitor how this investment is going?

All of these investments and imprudent methods of expenditure have led to the very tight fiscal position that

we are in today and are forcing the Minister of Finance, through his own ineptitude to delay important tax reductions that should be helping people now.

Sir, it hurts to see the \$34 million raised from the sale of Heywoods Hotel, the Arawak Cement Plant and Pine Hill Dairy shares being petered away by this Government on the scandalous Gems Project and, no doubt, part of the proceeds of the sale of good assets like Barbados National Bank and Insurance Corporation of Barbados will find a home down the hole of wasted expenditure to make Gems saleable.

Sir, the Public Enterprise Investment Fund is now being raided for such silly cosmetic projects as 'Wake Up Barbados'.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Yes, a couple of hundred thousand dollars have been taken from that fund and made available to Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation for 'Wake Up Barbados' which features the Urban Development Commission's stated building contractor.

The Minister of Finance turns a blind eye to the manner in which these funds and projects are being undertaken by the Urban Development Commission. Sir, millions are being given to people who have never been contractors, who cannot even hold a hammer and some of them are employees of Government subsidiaries and statutory corporations. Sir, these employees leave work to go to supervise projects by the Urban Development Commission and this scandalous situation is met by the ignorant and absurd response that we cannot stop anyone once they are qualified.

Pray tell me, Sir, what are the qualifications needed to access a \$42 000 contract to build or refurbish a house for the Urban Development Commission? Is it a make-up kit that is required? Sir, this is madness and it is unbelievable because a good idea like social transformation has been abused, in a scandalous way, and entities within the Ministry of Social Transformation have been twisted into handout 'pork-barrel' entities.

Sir, millions of dollars have been wasted and later in this debate the usual attempts will be made to bring files, letters and all sorts of innuendo to members of my Party but, at the end of the day, the Government must answer the questions of the people.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, the Government can ignore me because my time is limited but it must answer the questions of the people at the end of the day. If they do

not answer for their behaviour, more millions will be wasted because of the cavalier way in which funds voted by this Parliament are spent by these statutory corporations and private companies under this Government.

Sir, this is why land taxes are going up rather than down. It has also been predicted that bus fares, water rates and National Housing Corporation rents may go up.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados needs a change in direction for the future and the Democratic Labour Party has identified a few areas of major reform that will be part of its overall policy for taking Barbados forward.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Honourable Members on the other side may not want to hear that this is still a democracy and may feel that they will get all 30 seats and be able to march up and down this country stuffing the policies of the Barbados Labour Party down the throats of people but I can rest comfortably knowing that there will always be a Democratic Labour Party as long as I am alive and that we will always have alternative policies for the people of this country.

Sir, there are thousands of other Barbadians who feel the same way as I do. This country is not for sale and that is why we can stand up and say that we believe that lower taxation and more money in the pockets of Barbadians is a desirable thing and that a policy of tax reform will bring about a significant reduction in the tax burden through a complete overhaul of the personal and land tax regimes.

Sir, taxation and other incentives for small business development will be a key component of the Democratic Labour Party's job creation strategy. This can be done by cutting wastage, squandermania, corruption and graft. What was done yesterday in relation to income tax will have a minuscule effect in terms of increasing the disposable income of taxpayers in Barbados. Barbadians must not be fooled because the tax relief is not immediate and it must be taken against the background of increases in public sector wages this year and the next negotiations and the net effect will be very small.

For example, someone earning \$2 000 will pay \$18 less in tax per month in the income year 2003 but they will pay \$10 more in National Insurance per month which gives that person an increase in the disposable income of only eight dollars. Sir, the stark reality is that those who pay no tax will pay increased national insurance and they will, therefore, take home less money every week or every month.

The Minister of Finance, having squandered the public's money over the last five years, has no elbow room to give relief unless he reduces unnecessary expenditure.

Sir, in the recent public service negotiations, the difference between the union and the Government was a mere quarter of one per cent. The average public servant would have received \$6 more per month and a maid would have received \$3 more per month but the Government said it could not afford to pay that. Sir, salaries were legislated but, would you believe that this Government at the same time that this was happening found \$1.2 million for two consultants but the Crown could not find \$1.5 million to spread over 27 000 public servants in this country. Sir, it is a case of misplaced priorities.

Mr. Speaker, businesses have to make profit before they can pay corporation tax. In any event, the Government really has no choice but to harmonise the corporate tax rates with the region if we are to have an effective Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

The second area of the Democratic Labour Party's policy relates to a sustainable land use policy or owning a piece of the rock. This policy will seek to secure our land heritage for future generations by keeping land accessible and the prices within the reach of ordinary Barbadians. We pledge a comprehensive health care policy, a policy that will take a holistic, progressive approach to caring for the needy and, at the same time, protecting our health care providers. Sir, once again the health of our people will be a top priority.

6.00 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Housing the people of a nation. A roof over everyone's; a policy to solve our housing needs. We will make houses and land available accessible and affordable to every citizen. A triple 'A' policy to solve our housing needs. We will make houses and land available, accessible and affordable.

Education for life: To earn, you have to learn. A policy that will develop and institute programmes from childhood to adulthood that keeps pace with the fast-changing society. To ensure a functional society, no one can be left behind.

A safer community: Better safe than sorry. This policy will seek to put in place effective community programmes empowering the youth and disadvantaged by equipping our security services for a changing society.

Finally, Sir, social renewal: Compassionate social care. We will seek to bring about a social renewal where

groups at-risk in Barbados are made to feel that they matter and belong. The elderly, the youth and the disabled will benefit from major economic and social policies, policy innovations. The Democratic Labour Party is working assiduously on the programmes.

This Government, however, has in the interim lost its way. Its eyes are on the election clock rather than on the needs of the Barbadians. The only strategy that is important is the election strategy, not economic strategy.

The only thing that is important is election timing, not the timing of tax reductions. What is a Budget then if it is not about solving problems, and setting realistic goals and reviewing previous policies?

What is a financial statement in the context of recession, if it does not clearly point to how the obligations, responsibilities and sharing will follow? What is a Budget if there is no clamour for accountability and throws more money at problems?

I was amazed, Sir, last night how so many people in this country saw through this obvious attempt by the Prime Minister to delay relief in several ways until the midnight hour before the election bell is rung.

Sir, as I said at the beginning of my reply, we have the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who stands on a jetty as people are drowning and promises more lifeguards down the road. Clearly, the Prime Minister could have been more sensitive to the needs of the people of Barbados.

I am not talking about patronage, Sir. There is enough of that. I am say that all the stuff that he is holding back until the GEMS issue dies down should have brought to the people of Barbados yesterday.

The Minister of Finance is fundamentally playing with the lives of Barbadians while he sits and plans political strategies and deliberates on the appropriate time for bringing relief to the people of this country.

Persons with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and even cancer are dying unnecessarily and losing vital limbs because they simply cannot afford to follow the diet of their doctor. People with prescribed diets in this country cannot afford to live on the health foods that are prescribed.

Sir, it is funny and the members find that most funny but I know of so many people in this country who have diets prescribed by doctors, who cannot afford them, not on a pension. Beans, carrots, cabbages and spinach, many of these are costing more than \$5 a pound and you are asking people who are living on a meagre Government pension, or

those who work on the industrial estate and in the agricultural sector in Barbados to continue to try to make ends meet.

Sir, with such ludicrous prices, we in Barbados are paying five and six dollars a pound for tomatoes and you can go to Dominica and Trinidad and get them at fifty-five cents a pound, their currency, not ours.

Sir, the Minister of Finance has not told us how he proposes to enter into negotiations with his CARICOM partners to land fruits and vegetables in Barbados at an affordable price. He is not concerned with such issues. As far as he is concerned we do not need to address such issues to win an election.

The Minister of Finance comes to the country and says that he will give you \$500 in Customs duty-free at that airport per annum. The average Barbadian, I do not think minds paying something at the airport when he brings in items. What is happening, though, is that they are frustrated and alarmed that they can get tomatoes in Trinidadian and Dominica for fifty cents a pound but they cannot bring an ounce into this country to give their poor aunt who has diabetes or hypertension, and they cannot get them at that price here.

Sir, people are annoyed because they pass through Miami regularly and, with Christmas coming up, they see hams and turkeys at US\$7 but they cannot bring in one; they have to buy them here for \$80 and \$90.

Yes, workers on the industrial estates were listening yesterday to hear what assistance the Government would have given to them to ensure that they take home more than \$115 a week. Several of those women in particular are willing to work extra time to make an additional dollar. They would obviously be hoping that the Minister of Finance would have introduced minimum wage legislation in this country and would have looked at the Value-Added Tax, so that where there are single mothers, they could afford foodstuffs and baby products and so on. They need help and times are tough in Barbados.

Sir, this loving and caring Prime Minister and Minister of Finance smiled all the way through his presentation yesterday in high spirits, for he believes that he has an election-winning formula. He can act indifferently to the needs and cries of ordinary Barbadians and come May or June next year, with a few goodies, all will be well in Barbados.

Sir, I think that is reprehensible by my standards. I think that is a sick joke on the population of Barbados. The Prime Minister was given the largest mandate in the history of this country. He has sought to excel in the area of political games where he can fox and outfox everybody.

This Government was set to call an election around October of this year. Do not mind all the talk, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: They do not even want you to run and so you did not know that. I feel sorry for you and I told you not to interfere with me. There is a lot of information that I can give to you. You have to check your right hand and your left hand all the time. They are ready for you and some of the others over there.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, some of my good friends who are ready to say goodbye. They are still trying to find places for others. People who never put in all the work that you put in as a member of your Party but who could walk through the door...

Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Sir, on a point of order. I am thoroughly enjoying the speech of the Honourable Member for St. John, but the calling of elections in Barbados is a matter that is provided for under the Constitution of the country and it has to do with the issue of rites of this character. It is too false now, Mr. Speaker, for him to put into the record of this country that an election was to be called in October, when there was no process set in train for that to take place.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am of the view and hundreds of Barbadians would have been of the view that an election was imminent.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, even in today's newspaper, a political strategist par excellence was also of the view that an election was imminent but the GEMS issue broke and they realised that it did not go down well in some circles, so, the election has been postponed until next year.

Sir, what is worse is that, having postponed the election, the Prime Minister has also postponed the relief for the taxpayers of this country. He has postponed all the benefits that should flow to the people of Barbados until the appropriate time when it has maximum impact on the electorate of this country.

Sir, speaking for myself, I believe that particular approach is undesirable. Sir, you know something, if you can do it all the time and get away with it, why not do it? If the Honourable Member for St. Peter believes that he can do that all the time and get away with it, he will continue to do it.

6.10 p.m.

Tuesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I know traditionally that Barbadians are divided down the centre between 'Bees' and 'Dees'. I ask the people of Barbados this evening, suppose Errol Barrow, Richie Haynes, Erskine Sandiford or even I had pulled a stunt like this on the people of Barbados, what they would have done to a Democratic Labour Party administration?

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, delay the relief and at the end of the day prolong the suffering in this country. No relief from tomorrow. The relief has been down to the 2005 and 2006. There is no relief for the taxpayers of this country. The relief will come at the appropriate time, electorally.

Sir, if a Democratic Labour Party Minister of Finance had come to you boasting on the one hand how rosy things were, the economy is perking and the management is so good but yet on the other hand, refuses to share any of the benefits of that growth with the people, then, Sir, what are the people to do when they have an opportunity to go to the polls next time around?

If a Democratic Labour Party Minister of Finance had clearly stopped listening to the man in the street and concentrated his energies solely on the wishes of the so-called social partners, all of whom happened to be members of his 'How Great Thou Art Choir' what should the public do?

Sir, these are serious issues. The Barbados Labour Party Government has got so 'cocky' with itself that it believes it is no longer accountable to the people of Barbados. It can throw away hundreds of millions of dollars in GEMS and other projects and then feel no obligation to report to this Chamber what it has done with the people's money.

This administration believes it can sit back and allow small businesses to go under and low income families to collapse under the weight of rising prices and three weeks before it calls the next election, it can come with a few goodies, ease the pain and all will be well.

Sir, that is the calculation of this Government and the Minister of Finance. He believes he has it in the palm of his hands. I am calling on Barbadians to wake up and see what is going on in this country. This is not a matter for the Democratic Labour Party supporters alone. We all have to go to the supermarket. We are all collapsing under the weight of taxation like the VAT and other onerous taxes,

also, land taxes. The people of this country must send a strong unambiguous message to the Minister of Finance: These political stunts will not work. If relief can be given now, as the Minister suggested, then it should be delivered now to the poor people of this country.

I am saying to the people of Barbados your representatives have a duty to rise to their feet in this debate and promote your interest and not their electoral interest. There is nothing in this Budget for ordinary Barbadians and you must demand that they express that in the strongest of terms.

Of course, the focus of their attack will be on me, Sir, but when the dust has settled, as it always does, on this debate and the Government has 'put some licks' in David Thompson, as they enjoy doing, I ask each and every Barbadian this evening, how will their 'licks' on me, affects the price of onions, tomatoes and cabbages in Barbados. How will it affect your daily living, if every one of them gets up in here and curses the Democratic Labour Party - Sir, you would not allow that - but I am saying how will it affect you tomorrow? When they have gone through all of those theatrics and they have said all that they have to say about me, what will your life be like tomorrow? How will that enable you to take care of your families and to meet your monthly commitments?

Barbadians should open their eyes. More goodies will come, but when they do, you must tell the Minister of Finance they are too little, too late.

As we come to the debate itself, Sir, there will be those who can be summarised in the words of the poet, Yeats in "The Second Coming."

"...The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity..."

They will go after David Thompson and I am the Democratic Labour Party, but my parting question to Barbadians is: Was that what you put them in Parliament for, or did you put them in Parliament to defend your interest?

To the Minister of finance I say tonight, if you have no intension of using your enormous power in the country to help the people of Barbados, then step aside with your promise of life guards that will be coming next week, and let the Democratic Labour Party throw out a life line now and save more Barbadians from going under.

Sir, at the end of the day, one has to understand that this Budget has nothing in it for the average Barbadian.

I thank you, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, a few years after I entered public life, I had the honour of hearing a President from Uruguay describe the test of leadership to be that which requires a person to meet the needs of today, while still governing for the needs of tomorrow.

If I had to describe yesterday's Budget by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, it would be in the words that I heard on that occasion, largely because it reflected responsible, mature leadership, recognising the world in which we live today, one that is marked by great uncertainty, great international economic volatility, even prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks, one in which, Mr. Speaker, whether in the region, the OECS, whether in the wider Caribbean, whether in Latin America, or whether across the Globe, we assess that there are economic circumstances that are worrisome to all Governments.

Mr. Speaker, it is for that reason, I really must begin to wonder whether the speech just delivered by the Honourable Member for St. John was not, in fact, an attempt to be part of the famous Time Tunnel programme that I used to see as a child. It was a science fiction programme where persons were beamed into different times. Mr. Speaker, he gave a speech that was totally unrelated to the economic and social circumstances of either Barbados, CARICOM or indeed, the wider hemisphere.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, when I liken it to Time Tunnel, I remember today the back page of one paper where the other person who purports to be the leader of the Democratic Labour Party - because we are not sure which one is the leader - tried to liken the Prime Minister Budget to Star Trek. The combination of one in Time Tunnel and the other in Star Trek, makes me remember, Sir, and wonder whether that obsession with science fiction that both of them have, is not because the state of affairs of the Democratic Labour Party are so incredible and incredulous with the confusion which they have brought upon it, that the only way one can refer to it is by relating to science fiction modalities and metaphors.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether the state of confusion in the Leader of the Opposition's head has been greater than the state of confusion in the Democratic Labour Party. Suffice it to say, Mr. Speaker, it is impossible for me to believe that any Leader of the Opposition, in the context of the crisis that the world is seeing, which is being described almost as the worst since the great depression and certainly as bad as the 1974 oil crisis, that the Leader of the Opposition could speak for two and a half hours and not once engage the global, hemispheric or regional realities within which Barbados finds itself as a small open economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is an exercise in sophistry because there is a belief that the people of this country are only interested in 'pork-barrel' politics. There is a belief, Mr. Speaker, that as long as you raise the anthem of the poor small black man, that all will be well.

What, in fact, was his record? He was the member of a Cabinet that also presided when there was a recession in this country.

6.20 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: What was the record, Mr. Speaker? We heard of a recession in Barbados, there are elements every day on television showing us what we are confronting across the rest of the world, because there has been some minimal loss of jobs and because they have been under-performance in some of the productive sectors.

In 1991, people did not only hear about a recession, they felt it with every part of their body because 4 000 people were sent home from the public service and unemployment reached one of the highest levels ever in this country, 27 per cent, because interest rates were high and people were forced to find ways to meet the loans repayments that they had without income coming in that they anticipated and because this country was down to \$11 million in foreign reserves.

When I compare the indices of 1991 with the ones of 2001 and 2002, unemployment in Barbados is now at 10 per cent. We regret as a Government that it has gone from 9.3 per cent to 10 per cent but the reality is that we have made as a plank of Government's stabilisation programme of the economy that jobs mattered and that we would do what is necessary to 'hold a line' on jobs.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that the National Emergency Economic Programme which was outlined by the Prime Minister last year was premised on that path and the Fund which became available to the hotels who were experiencing losses as a result of September 11, \$10 million was, on the basis that we were impressing upon them the need to 'hold a line' with the employment of their particular concern.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Government that has shown a human face in relation to a recession. This is a Government that has been able to confront a recession with the highest level of foreign reserves that this country has ever seen, in excess of \$1.5 billion which is six months of import cover, in contrast to the one week. I am not going to dwell on those matters alone, Mr. Speaker, because as a Government we will continue to do our business to govern the country and we will continue to hold faith with those who found it

possible to put their confidence in us individually as constituency representatives and collectively as an administration. They felt then, as I am sure they feel now, that the Prime Minister of this country is seized not only of the domestic reality that we must confront but how we would meander our way through the most uncertain period of global governance in the last 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, we do not know if there would be a war in Iraq. We do not know if oil prices will continue to rise such as would affect the cost of living in this country and the capacity of businesses which are already marginal in their ability to survive. Mr. Speaker, we do not know even now whether the impact of the fear generated by a sniper in Washington D.C. will have an impact on the travel and tourism trade out of the United States of America - although I am minded to suggest that were that an event happening in our part of the world a travel advisory would surely have been issued against us - but that is the world in which we live.

I attended a meeting last week, Mr. Speaker, on the behalf of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF). Last year we were dealing only with money laundering as an issue in that institution. This year we have now been asked to extend its mandate to terrorism financing, even if terrorism is not an immediate problem for other countries within the region. That means that the already scarce resources that we have now, have to be deployed to put an entire regime in place in order to satisfy a global community that we have adequately protected ourselves against the risk of having Barbados to be used as a domicile for terrorism financing. It also means that when we get there we will find that in addition to those requirements that are being thrust upon us from the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have developed over 120 criteria which they will use to assess each one of us. So for us to be ready for those assessments mean that we have to go through a whole internal process.

Mr. Speaker, I am not dwelling on these things but I cite them merely as an example to show you that on a daily basis we are being engaged in matters that we have not necessarily put on our front burner but because we are a responsible sovereign state we have to meet these obligations.

Mr. Speaker, this does not even carry us into the sphere which the Honourable Member for St. John knew about when he signed on in April 1994 in respect of the commitments given by his government with him as Minister of Finance that would have had certain revenue implications because of the need to reduce taxes on a whole range of goods in order for us to comply with the World

Trade Organisation and the agreements established under that entity.

Mr. Speaker, what did he do then? He spoke on March 28, 1994, but not one mention was made of it, yet in April 1994, three or four days later, he signed an agreement that is now causing manufacturing in Barbados to reel and that is causing people to go home because the manufacturers cannot compete by reason of the fact that the Government has a legal obligation to reduce duties to a point where they are uncompetitive. But what do we do instead, Mr. Speaker? We have tried as a Government to put in place a regime for the recapitalisation and the retooling of our productive sectors but the Leader of the Opposition, who knows better, will want you to believe that this is an overnight process and would tell you that things should happen within 12 months or two years.

Mr. Speaker, in 1968, the Government of Ireland through its Industrial Development Agency determined that they wanted to pursue a path of alternative industrial development as opposed to the protectionist regime that has governed their affairs for 50 years before. It was not until the 1980s that they were able to see the fruits of consistent building in that sector in Ireland.

The point I am making to you, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a time process to everything in life and there is a time process to governments and governance. It is unfortunate that we would have persons who want to be in public life but who would try to excite expectations of instant delivery without reference to educating people as to the process that is necessary.

Last Monday, the Minister of Consumer Affairs launched the Innovation Fund. Do you understand what the innovation Fund is, Mr. Speaker? That Fund is to assist and to give a chance to young Barbadians, who have never had the opportunity to get an idea finance in something novel and who by reason of their inability to go to a bank and get finance, to be able to build an enterprise.

6.30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I can only say that the Honourable Member for St. John has never sent anyone to FUNDACCESS, the Rural Enterprises Fund or the Urban Enterprise Fund. I have and I know the difference it has made to families who want to expand their agricultural production and who want to show some thrift in savings.

Mr. Speaker, this Government took one development institution which was moribund and was like a dinosaur that they themselves would have abolished and we have

created a series of financial institutions. Why? Because one of the legacies of being a colony or of slavery was that we have generations of Barbadians who have not been able to come out of poverty at the same time and, therefore, do not have the same level of access to capital.

Mr. Speaker, unless the state, such as ours, accepts a responsibility to provide funding for people to be able to access capital to make something of themselves and of their ideas, they would wallow in poverty. Government has done that and has put in this year's 2002-2003 Budget over \$14 million between the Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission and the Poverty Alleviation Fund.

Mr. Speaker, who is that for? Is it for St. Lucians who do not live in Barbados? It is for Barbadians. We have recognised that in 2001 even though the economy contracted, that this Government had a responsibility to increase spending in the social sectors in order to be able to provide a cushion for those Barbadians because, in the same way that we have provided a cushion to the tourism sector through the \$10 million fund, we understood the demands on the social welfare institution may have increased this year because of the turbulent economic circumstances which started in 2001. These Estimates were laid in March this year when the economy was already in recession.

Mr. Speaker, I am not bothered by the words of the Honourable Member for St. John. He is of two minds as to whether he wants to lead or to sit out and to wait for Senator Mascoll to be his political 'stepney', so that he could let Senator Mascoll lose the next election and he could come back as a great white knight. He does not want to be the next Edward Seaga of Barbados. He does not want to have the distinction of leading a party into great electoral loss for a third time - and I predict, Mr. Speaker, a fourth and a fifth because, with the attitude that he has displayed which is imperilled and derisory as to the state of Barbadians, for him be in a position to exercise the mature leadership which is necessary to lead this country.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the Prime Minister has sought to meet the challenges of today while still building the framework for tomorrow. The Honourable Member for St. John has had 2 hours, 33 minutes and has not spoken on the matter of pensions reform, which is the single greatest issue that has the capacity to decimate the quality of life in this society.

We have generations of Barbadians who have worked, especially in the last 70 years, in ensuring that all of us could live longer and could enjoy a better quality of life. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have a moral responsibility to ensure that those who, as the Prime Minister has said, are in primary school, when they reach

the evening of their days, they would have the opportunity to benefit from the state pension system in the same way that you too would at some point in the future.

Mr. Speaker, unless we take a decision at this stage, we would not have the opportunity to fulfill that promise that was left by our foreparents for us and which we must leave for our future children.

Equally, we confront the unfortunate circumstances where the developed world continues to launch assault after assault on our tax system and on our rights in this Parliament to tax. Sir, in my view, the next thing they are going to come for is our system of fiscal incentives because they are unhappy that capital moves across the world to find a location which gives them the most preferential regime to establish enterprise.

Sir, what has happened is that we have a situation where, for two years, we have confronted the OECD. Sir, that, like the Capital Punishment Debate, with the Human Rights Commission, raises issues as to the doctrine of the separation of powers. That doctrine is in crisis and we are seeing a conflict between the executive and the legislature on the one hand and the judiciary because national norms are being used to try to subject national Parliaments.

Sir, no sooner was that over, Barbados was cited in the Homeland Security Bill as being a tax haven even though the same United States Government, as a member of the OECD, recognised there was nothing in Barbados international financial services regime that spoke to the issue of us being a tax haven and that there is no reason or logic to it. In fact, they are more likely to be correct in describing Delaware and other states as tax havens than Barbados.

Sir, what is more offensive about it, is that it is in a Homeland Security Bill which deals with terrorism, therefore, it gives the impression that we are a terrorist financing state or one that facilitates it. Mr. Speaker, it is a fight that we would have to continue as a Government because it would impact negatively on our international financial services sector.

Sir, these are the battles we are facing and by extension, on our tourism sector and, therefore, what is this folly of talking about the Prime Minister helping the economic sector.

Mr. Speaker, our trading sectors have shown sluggish growth in the last number of years. In each of those years, the Prime Minister has indicated the need for radical restructuring but we understand these things take time. It does not mean that we would be anxious to implement, it does not mean that we would be anxious to move forward but with the best will in the world what we

have to do, as a Government, is to create a framework within which those who are engaged in enterprise in the productive sectors could respond, could move forward and could uplift the quality of living by the creation of additional wealth.

Mr. Speaker, it is a challenge that has to be met, not only by Government but by the private sector of Barbados as well. Sir, I would be less than honest with you, without seeking to be critical, to say that I am not a little disappointed that, instead of one of our largest companies putting \$16 million into a supermarket where the purchasing power remains the same in the country, I would have preferred to see it in the building of productive capacity with export earnings and with the capacity to create more jobs because, as a country, that is where our future lies.

Mr. Speaker, what all of us, at the same time, is trying to do, for example, the Prime Minister, Minister of Economic Development, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Tourism or Minister of Consumer Affairs, is seeking to put a new framework for a new economy, while at the same time, appeal to the private sector to fundamentally change how they do business, operating as a mercantile community for the last 300 year in this country.

Sir, that is not easy. It requires understanding the outside markets into which they must go. Therefore, we have recognised that for us to survive effectively in a free trade area or in a liberalised economy, there must be at least a few large firms that are capable of being competitive, while through measures such as the 100 per cent Bajan campaign and tourism which requires no incentives to survive, we will continue to maintain employment and to expand our foreign exchange earning capacity.

The Prime Minister spoke about the need for strategic alliances with the BNB and the ICB because the world in which we live has changed so quickly that the concept of banking as High Street banking is no longer there. The reality is that we are now into an age where the range of financial services is so wide and varied that unless one is in a position to offer them at competitive prices one is cutting oneself out of the market.

6.40 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Do we want the Barbados National Bank to become a historic relic or do we want it to be part of a burgeoning economy within CARICOM responding to the needs of the people?

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on other things which are necessary to make an economy competitive and a society fair and just because it is not only about competition but also social justice, fairness and equity because those things combined, will help to improve the quality of life for people.

Mr. Speaker, in 1956, the Magistrates Courts magisterial jurisdictions were established and since then there has only been an increase of one magistrate in the country in terms of establishment of position. When this Government came to office in 1995, we met a difficulty situation in the High Court and we created an additional position of High Court judge. It is our judgement that the delays in the judicial system have an impact negatively both on our competitiveness as a jurisdiction as well as on our capacity to maintain social harmony and peace within this nation both from the civil and criminal perspective.

We have, therefore, taken a deliberate judgement that in spite of whatever else we will do in the justice sector, we will also improve the administration of justice, streamline the rules governing the legal process and introduce technology to record the orders of the Magistrates Courts.

Mr. Speaker, we have a backlog of more than 4 000 cases in the Magistrates Court and it is this Government's view that this backlog must be removed. We also have a backlog of about 90 cases at the Assizes and we want to be current in this regard. Since 1991, divorce proceedings filed in the Registry went from 271 to 453 which is 100 per cent increase. Contrary to popular belief, criminal cases have only gone from 105 to 134, less than 25 per cent increase. Civil cases have gone from 123 to 2 703, an increase of more than 160 per cent. An analysis of these figures does not paint the whole picture because the reality is that every civil case has a number of interlocking proceedings that are not reflected in those numbers. Mr. Speaker, we will work assiduously to deal with these matters. We will have eight High Court judges, an additional four Court of Appeal judges and additional two magistrates.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that Cabinet has settled on the structure for the creation of a National Commission on Law and Order and, on a soon date, I will announce that Commission to the public. We will meet with the public because we believe that it is necessary for all Barbadians to be involved in an effort to be able to reduce lawlessness and stem crime in the country.

It will require a commitment on several different fronts. It will require the strengthening of law enforcement, legislative and penal reform, strengthening the administration of the justice system, strategic social

intervention among people at risk people, the reform of cultural value and reducing opportunities for crime.

We feel that this is something in which the entire population must be involved and that it is not a fight of the police alone who continue to do their best with the resources which they have.

Mr. Speaker, I am also grateful for the decision for the establishment of the containerised park because it will assist us in being able to insure that we can fight the smuggling of illegal narcotics but, Sir, I believe that firearms is the single greatest problem facing us within the area of law and order. It is one thing to throw two stones at a person because that person will get up again but when a gun is fired that person may never get up again.

Mr. Speaker, I am also grateful for the fact that my constituents will be part and parcel of the beneficiaries for the expansion of the natural gas programme which is critical to the individual household as well as to business enterprises in this country.

I am also grateful for the fact that my constituents will be able to face the reality of affordable house insurance in this country because every week we have a house fire. Tropical Storm Lilly just went by and a lot of houses were not insured and this Government wants to keep house insurance affordable because for the average Barbadian the investment in a house is the most substantial investment they have and it is, therefore, critical that they continue to be able to protect it in every way possible.

In a region where insurance rates are spiraling because of natural disasters and terrorist acts taking place, this Government cares and has put in place a regime to be able to keep the price of house insurance premiums within a realistic and affordable level. We are not only talking about people with wall houses because, Mr. Speaker, many people continue to protect their interests by insuring their chattel houses.

Mr. Speaker, these measures are designed to make sure that the hotels and restaurants that the Honourable Member spoke about can maintain levels of employment as far as possible in spite of the downturn in economic activity. We are confident that we will come back up again because, as Minister responsible for Immigration, I receive tourism figures in Barbados every week and, I am happy to report, and the Ministry of Tourism will report as well, that since the beginning of July, we have experience increases in arrivals in the tourism sector. We hope that pattern of increase would go into the tourism season and ensure that we could reduce the level of unemployment yet again to below 10 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak about the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. The Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, in my view, is one of the most powerful institutions in this country. Through its radio station and its television programme it has more influence on the average Barbadian than any other single institution. We have a responsibility to recognise that we have lost virtually two generations of Barbadians to foreign values and this has put a strain on this society's capacity to maintain its social harmony as we have known it.

We have a responsibility to see how we can seek to alter the impact that foreign programming has on the values of young Barbadians and this cannot be done by censorship or telling them they cannot watch the programme because they will simply rent a video and watch it. This can be done by offering a range of options including the ability to see themselves in a positive way on a consistent basis rather than be involved in watching foreign imports which seek only to establish the cultures of the United States of America as our norms.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, we have indicated within the Ministry that it is our desire that CBC for Channel 8 moves to a position of 80 per cent local and regional programming. We do not know if they will make the 80 per cent but we believe it to be an appropriate target while at the same time recognising that those who want to watch foreign programmes could still do so through the cable network.

The Prime Minister has indicated that this Government will honour its promise to divest elements of CBC's shareholding. I believe that this is the appropriate way for us to go because all Barbadians who want to be able to have a vested state in CBC should be able to do so particularly since CBC must not only focus on the domestic market but with the changing technology be able to focus on the international market as far as possible, recognising not only how it can position Barbados and Barbados' strategic interest through information but also recognise the financial benefits that would accrue from such a decision.

6.50 p.m.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, yesterday the Prime Minister spoke to the issue of the reform in the Immigration Department as part of the development programme of tourism. I can tell this Honourable Chamber that we would be bringing a new Immigration Bill, in the next year, to Parliament. Our Immigration Act has become outmoded and is incapable of meeting the challenges of a new Barbados. We are also working on a Paper which will seek to improve the technological basis on which Immigration Officers perform their duties at the airport. We know of the constant concerns of persons who say that they have to wait for long periods at the airport. The reality

is that with the best wool in the world, while we have a duty to facilitate smooth entry into Barbados, we also have a duty to maintain the national security of this country.

On an early occasion I spoke to the country about the worrisome trend of criminals moving within the countries of southern and eastern Caribbean that requires us to be more vigilant in respect of who comes into and goes out of Barbados. We hope that this improvement in the technological base and the training of Immigration officers would strengthen us, not only in respect of its appeal to be a facilitator for tourists but also in our national security requirement.

Mr. Speaker, you are signaling me all the time but I am not sure what that means.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I was now getting comfortable. Sir, on another occasion I will have the opportunity to engage the House.

Mr. Speaker, between 1994 and 2002, we have seen every year, a continuing process of our development and we have seen the leadership exercised by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, recognised that while there must be fundamental restructuring of our economy, that the issues and precepts of social justice and fairness must always be the hallmark of this Government.

In whatever we do, we must both be compassionate and sensible in respect of how we recognise our duties. We have a responsibility to continue to see this economy grow. If we do not do it, we cannot maintain the relative standard of living that we have inherited from our predecessors. We have a responsibility to do that through the instruments available, through fiscal reform and selective stimuli in economic sectors.

The Prime Minister, in his judgement, in spite of a recession for the last year, in spite of recessions in the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States of America, has tried, within our capacity, to minimise the fallout to the average Barbadian household and enterprise, and to ensure that even though the seas on which we travel may be rough, there is minimal opportunity for sea sickness or anybody falling overboard.

Mr. Speaker, when I compare it with the challenges faced by a similar administration in 1991, I say that we are on the right track under his astute leadership. Mr. Speaker, we believe that he or the Government cannot do it alone but there must be continued engagement of the Barbadian society and the Barbadian private sector.

Mr. Speaker, we trust that, given what I heard in the commentary for the last two days, there is desire on the part of the Barbadian society to make the best with what we have and to recognise that the secret to our phenomenal development has not been by revolution but by evolution, steady and slow. Sir, as we have been taught by our grandparents, a little with content is great gain.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 7.45 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 7.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

7.00 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we were treated to the worst possible effort by any Opposition Leader in the history of Budget debates since Independence. I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was allowed to assert himself and assume the position of the Opposition Leader, the cause of the Democratic Labour Party would have been much better served this afternoon.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the political career of the Honourable Member for St. John has been characterised by a series of wishy-washy statements, a great unfamiliarity with serious economic and financial issues and little or no knowledge of economic programming to restructure and reposition this Barbadian economy unless, of course, he is guided by the International Monetary Fund, as was the case in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly did not come as any surprise to me, I do not know if it came as a surprise to any of the others on this side, that during his delivery this afternoon, a former candidate of the Democratic Labour Party, one who was handsomely defeated by the Honourable Member for St. James North in the election of 1999, fell asleep.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, someone who is extremely close to the Honourable Member for St. John, vacated the Gallery during the delivery.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I had learnt on arriving in this Honourable Chamber is that you should be honest and truthful each time you are given an opportunity to speak. Nothing could be further from the truth when the Leader of the Opposition made mention during his delivery that there are persons in Barbados who are afraid to speak their minds about the functioning Barbadian economy, and the direction that the economic policy should take this economy. He went so far as to say that business leaders in this country are afraid to speak out for fear of reprisals and of what may become of their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, that is very dangerous and for someone who has been intrusted with great responsibility by the people of St. John for a number of years, who had risen to be a leader of the great institution, the Democratic Labour Party, it is hard to believe that someone who held the office of the Minister of Finance for a short period could be making such ridiculous statements in this Honourable Chamber. This tells me that the Honourable Member, sooner rather than later, should be recalled. The people of St. John would get that opportunity, and I sincerely hope that they would rid themselves of someone who continues to heap no end of embarrassment on them with reckless, most ridiculous statements.

I spent two days at Sherbourne at the last national consultation in July. All Honourable Members on this side would have participated in those economic discussions in July this year. Last year, there was a similar consultation. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Barbados met and came to a consensual position on the structure of an economic recovery programme to take this economy forward.

Sir, at no time did I hear any business leader speaking in a tone, and the use of language, which suggest to me that they were afraid of speaking out. Quite to the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the businessmen were very frank, they were open, they were very deliberate and they were very direct. As a matter of fact, they came with a wish list, knowing very well that the Government could not have entertained each and everything they were asking for on that list.

I really think, Mr. Speaker, that politicians whether they are on This Side or the Other Side really have to be more responsible. We really have to move beyond seeking to disrespect and disregard the process and efforts of those private operators and businessmen who are trying their utmost, with the help of this administration, to restore some measure of good performance to this Barbados economy.

Mr. Speaker, the reality of economic life in Barbados is that there has been a decline in the economic performance in the year 2001 - the Prime Minister said it and it is there for everybody to see - to the tune of 2.7 per cent and again during the first six months of 2002, of an order of about 1.6 per cent. Mr. Speaker, Barbados was not the only economy, small or large, experiencing recessionary conditions. Most countries would have suffered from the global recession, the OECD threat, the pace and direction of trade liberalisation and the events of September 11, 2001.

However, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated yesterday that we had been able to weather the storm. Our economy has gone back on a growth path during the third quarter of 2002, and should realise growth of about 2 per cent in the year 2003, and an annual average rate of growth of between 2.5 per cent and 3 per cent between 2004 and 2006. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the restoration of growth depends crucially on the revitalisation of the productive sectors of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is within that context that the Prime Minister delivered what in my considered opinion, are series of economic and financial statements which would provide the revitalisation of the productive sectors in the short term, while at the same time putting mechanisms in place which would allow for sustainability in the good economic performance of Barbados.

It is to that, that all right thinking people in this country should be focussing their attention. I have imagined they would have been focussing their attention on this for the longest while, and certainly more so since the delivery of the Economic Statement yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, let me turn my attention to the sector for which I have ultimate responsibility and that is agriculture. This sector continues to bear the brunt of the aggravation and heat on this economy, as a result of the new world trade order.

In recognition of the challenges facing the sector, on August 8th last year - and the Government's position was reiterated when the Prime Minister delivered the economic recovery programme on October 29th last year - four policies were announced in the context of reform to be undertaken in the sector:

1. The sector was provided with protection in all forms to the extent consistent with regional and international trading agreements,
2. A continued targeted financial assistance to support efficient forming enterprises,
3. An expansion of local market access - and you can add as a corollary - a decentralisation of the

marketing and distribution systems for agricultural commodities,

4. A land use policy which afforded the sector adequate lands to prosper.

Mr. Speaker, sometime during the course of last year, a reform programme for the sugar industry was also announced with the initial focus on the rationalisation of the factory operations. Since August 2001, the response to these more recent policy initiatives has been fairly encouraging.

7.55 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I will now list some of the successes and the impact of the various initiatives.

1. The Government has been able to effect the implementation of the special safeguard mechanism to provide additional protection to the sector.
2. We have been able to launch the land for the landless programme in October of 2001. To date, the response to this initiative has been overwhelming. The executing agency, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation has about 304 requests for approximately 3 000 acres of land.
3. The much maligned Agricultural Development Fund was formerly launched on December 19, 2001 and capitalised in April 2002 with \$28.2 million. As at October 18, 2002, approved loans and grants total some \$13.9 million and pending applications were of the order of \$6.3 million.
4. To date, we have disbursed \$5.1 million to the sugar industry and the Agricultural Development Fund has been used to replenish the Rural Enterprise Fund of the Rural Development Commission by some \$1 million.
5. Since August 2001, the Rural Enterprise Fund and the Livestock Development Fund both of which are administered by the Rural Development Commission have disbursed loans to the agricultural sector totalling \$631 196 and benefiting 66 farmers and nine fisherfolk.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I said earlier that when we come into this Honourable Chamber and we do our business outside of it, we have to be honest because when the Honourable Member for St. John said that he cannot send any of his constituents to any of these Funds to access any money because they have been turned back, that the paper work is so tedious and that people get frustrated quickly, one will get the impression that the money that

was used to replenish the Rural Enterprise Fund and the loan repayments were just lying down there waiting for all the problems that the Honourable Member for St. John spoke about to be sorted before any of that money could be access. I am not talking about the agricultural loans only because 66 farmers and nine members of the fishing industry have been able to access \$631 000. That has nothing at all to do with the other loans going to the other areas of economic activity, so that gives the lie once more to what the Honourable Member for St. John said but then again persons can very easily give the lie to many of the other things that he has said in his time as a politician.

During that period, the Government, notwithstanding the economic performance, has been able to advance its markets rehabilitation programme. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the markets at Conset Bay and Skeete's Bay were officially open during that period. The markets at Paynes Bay, Tent Bay, the Glebe and High Street have been completed and shall be opened shortly. I can also assure you that the project at Deacons Road has been completed and phase 1 of the repairs to the Oistins jetty is also completed. The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown can give us the assurance as well that the rehabilitation work at Cheapside will be completed in the very near future. Mr. Speaker, that does not sound like a Government that is not looking to advance the cause of the agricultural sector. There is design work at the preliminary stage for the Fairchild Street market and for the redesign of the stalls at Six Roads, Six Men's and Redmans Village.

Mr. Speaker, regarding cotton development, the farmers have benefited from the price support given for the periods 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 as the price for Sea Island cotton was increased from \$3.20 to \$4.80 per pound. The area under cotton increased from 68 acres in the 2000-2001 crop to 225 acres during the 2001-2002 crop.

In respect of sugar cane development, the Government provided \$7.2 million in price support for the crop of 2000 and 2001 and there was the replanting of 1 761.7 acres. Consistent with the policy the Prime Minister spoke about last year, sugar imports were stopped and the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation has started to release Barbados' sugar on the local market from this crop.

We heard yesterday of a number of new initiatives for the sector and I will return to some of them. The Prime Minister was correct when he said that there has been a raft of incentives and concessions to the agricultural sector but the sector has not been able to access these incentives at the desired pace. That is a fact. That is nothing to hide. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in collaboration with those who are to benefit from these incentives sat together at a seminar in March of this year to deal with the challenges facing the sector as they relate to

the lack of speed and these incentives being utilised for the creation of new investments in the sector.

We are resolved to remove some of the bottleneck in the system which are preventing a swifter access of these incentives. With the establishment of the National Agricultural Commission one of its roles would be to help with the removal of the bottleneck that obviate progress in the sector. There will be some focus on making the incentives programme at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development a little more impactful.

8.05 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, the first major irrigation project to be undertaken in Barbados since the mid-1980s when the integrated Rural Development Project was established, would be done in the near future and yesterday we heard from the Prime Minister that, Government recognising the crucial importance of water for agriculture...

Mr. Speaker, it is not only for non-sugar agriculture. I visited Swaziland a number of years ago to attend an ACP Sugar Conference and was amazed how water could be used for sugar cane as well.

Sir, there were massive estates there. There is a technology called pivot irrigation. They had massive fields of sugar canes being supplied with water via this pivot irrigation system but, of course, in our case, the water that we would want to get into the farming communities is to support the revitalisation of agriculture in the area of non-sugar agriculture.

Sir, this is a major initiative and is one that the farmers, BADMC, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Rural Development Commission, the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited that administers the Agricultural Development Fund, have told us at numerous sessions that we have had. They have gone through the length and breadth of the agricultural communities speaking about ways and means of taking the sector forward and of giving all players the opportunity to identify the particular constraints and ways and means as to how to deal with the bottlenecks. Throughout this, there was a recurring theme, that is, that water was to be made more readily available; that there should be a refurbishing of the existing irrigation infrastructure and there should be an expansion of the irrigation infrastructure.

Sir, we will expend no less than \$2.5 million over the next two years to refurbish the irrigation systems at Ruby, St. Philip; Jackmans; Spring Vale; St. Patricks; Friendship; March Field; Marshals and Poyer.

In terms of the expansion of the infrastructure, there would be no fewer than ten irrigation districts being established over the next three years: Three Houses; Sedge Pond; Diamond Valley; Bath; South District; Pine Basin; Burnt House; Back River; Spences; Sweet Vale and New Castle.

Sir, it is estimated that these new districts would cost no less than \$3.768 million - and the Honourable Member for St. John would want us to believe that the Government is not looking to support agriculture when these are major initiatives.

Sir, the revitalisation of the pig industry in the short term was mentioned and this is an initiative that we should all embrace. Sir, I would like to inform this Honourable Chamber that a very steadied approach was undertaken to identify those large and small pig farmers who could help us with the revitalisation of the pig industry.

Sir, in regards to the poultry industry, the Prime Minister spoke about the trade policy aspects and the need for us to use what instruments that are available in order to provide the added protection to the industry and the need for the BADMC to be maintained as a safe-trading enterprise, while playing a very vital regulatory role in the poultry market.

Mr. Speaker, we would be going further because the Ministry has to speak to the competitiveness issue that is lacking in the poultry industry. Therefore, the Ministry will support the initiatives of farmers who come together to address the issue of the economy of scale associated with small production units by supporting their investments in wind tunnel technology through the Land for the Landless Programme and the Agricultural Development Fund.

Sir, there are two proposals for the establishment of wind tunnel ventilated form already with the Ministry and the Agricultural Development Fund, one with a required \$401 000 and one which brings together a number of poultry farmers with a request for \$2.2 million.

Sir, there are other initiatives, for example, implementing the first phrase of the Scotland District Development Plan. In the area of fisheries development, the Government would be seeking to intensify certain aspects of the Fisheries Management Plan 2001-2003 and would be putting a request before the Minister of Finance in our Estimates for the rebate on boat repairs to be increased to 50 per cent up to a maximum of \$4 000 per boat.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two minutes in which to conclude.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that time has ran out on me but it would be very remiss of me if I did not do two things: one, to thank the good and loving people of the constituency of St. Philip South for giving me the opportunity to come to this Chamber and to articulate their concerns and for giving me the opportunity to be part of a team which is going to help chart a course which would allow for the proper repositioning and restructuring of the Barbadian economy.

Secondly, if I did not place on the record of this Chamber, the gratitude of these good constituents of St. Philip South who, for the last three years, nine months, have seen their constituency taken its rightful place in the social and economic development of this country.

Indeed, the constituents are grateful for a number of achievements, including, the expansive road programme of the Government which has seen the number of roads being dealt with. For example, Cave Land; Nursery No. 2, Four Roads; Harlington; Ruby Tenantry; Foul Bay; Gemswick; Casuarina Drive, Ruby Development and the major highway end of the project where considerable progress is being made. Sir, at present work is going on at Bentley's Tenantry, Brereton, Belair, Mangrove Land and there are other places that are planned.

8.15 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. A.P. WOOD: We are also grateful for electrification of the area by the Rural Development Commission which has gone a long way in providing better security and easing the fears that previously existed among the elderly persons who make regular trips to and from church.

We are also grateful for the level of social upliftment provided by this caring administration through enlightened social programmes through the work of the Rural Development Commission and other agencies that fall under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Transformation.

We are also grateful for the level of social cohesion that now exists and the abandonment of the opportunistic behaviour that previously existed.

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say that Government can rest assured that the constituents of St. Philip South are firmly in support of this current administration notwithstanding the difficulties that the economy experienced in 2001 and the first six months in 2002. Sir, there will never be a return to the dark days of the Democratic Labour Party rule.

I commend these economic and financial policies to this Honourable House and to the people of Barbados.

Hon. R. R FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the good people of Christ Church East on whose behalf I make this contribution to this 2002 Economic Policy Statement delivered so ably by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, the Minister of Finance.

I want to applaud him for the content and the manner in which he delivered this statement. It is to be contrasted with the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. John, which would not have been recognised by the Right Excellent Errol Barrow, whom he replaced as Member of Parliament for St. John and who was himself a former Minister of Finance and Leader of the Democratic Labour Party.

As a matter of fact, the Right Excellent Errol Barrow would have been ashamed to have been associated with the approach taken by the Honourable Member for St. John and it was a presentation with which the Right Excellent Grantley Adams could not have in any way identified.

Throughout the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. John, he sought to have us believe that now is the only time we should concentrate on. Those two Right Excellent gentlemen were builders and leaders and they transformed the economies in their times not by short term 'what-is-in-it-for-me- today' measures but by visionary, well-thought-out, well-crafted policies like holiday with pay, the deep water harbour and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. These were hallmarks of the Right Excellent Sir Grantley Adams. The National Insurance Scheme, part of the discussion today, was founded the Right Excellent Errol Barrow. These were policies that recognised great that the stuff leadership is made of thinks not only of today but of tomorrow.

Sir, we have a solid responsibility and a sacred obligation imposed on us by virtue of those persons in our constituencies who sent us here to lead as well as to the wider public but the Honourable Member for St. John spends two and a half hour to regale us with stories about men in swimming trunks on jetties.

Sir, we need to take seriously the presentation of the Honourable Minister of Finance who recognises that even as we seek to grapple with short-term stimulation of the economy for today that his policies need to be very strategic in their orientation and that there were a number of serious macro economic structural social and environmental issues which we as a country and people need to address as we look toward the long term.

The Honourable Member set about to cast this Budget within the context of our medium term strategy and

the core element of that strategy focused on economic diversification with special emphasis on the trading, export and production sectors to make sure we were able to earn our way in the world.

Sir, it also revolved around aspect of public sector reform to make sure we are able to generate fiscal savings, to improve the delivery of Government services and reduce the cost of doing business in Barbados.

Human resource development is another important aspect of the strategy and this has to be in support of the economic diversification efforts and, of course, a complete focus on poverty reduction, particularly in housing and education. These aspects of the strategy are delivered between our Estimates presented in March every year and these Economic Policy Statements delivered later each year.

8.25 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Sir, you would recognise that the matters of allocating expenditure in support of these programmes are principally dealt with during the Estimates. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was able to recap for us some of the key aspects of expenditure, particularly in support of our social programmes, providing the social safety net, health care and education. To ensure that our people are able to participate to the best of their ability so that no one is left behind.

Sir, we have to focus on the economic policy aspect of this Budget. Therefore, it is only fitting that the measures for this year, 2002, should focus on restructuring the economy to make it more competitive, particularly in the post 2005 period, when we will have the full impact of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the Free Trade Areas of the Americas.

Sir, we focused on tax reform which is very fundamental at this stage. We have not had any major tax reform for the personal and corporate taxes since 1990. We focused on pension reform which is also fundamental. It is not to say what is in it for me today but for the future of those who are in nursery and primary school.

Sir, the Prime Minister was not looking with any eye on any elections but looking to ensure that matters which could come to fruition in a negative way in 2032 are being dealt with today, that is being responsible.

Sir, I am going to digress for a moment. When I listened to the Honourable Member for St. John, I thought that it was he who has his eye upon elections. He was into

the questions about forecasting and all kinds of things. He delivered a manifesto of promises with no details. It is left to the eyes and the minds of the beholder.

Sir, the policy focused on pension reform and the commitment of a reduction of the deficit and public sector reform as it relates to the operation of state enterprises. I want to say a few things on pension reform and I want to ensure that everyone in this country understands exactly what it is that we are doing. If you follow the guidance of the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. John, he would focus on the fact that, yes, there is an increase contribution to National Insurance phased in over a period of time that is required.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter could have easily fooled the public. He could have easily ignored the situation with respect to pension reform and postpone it until a future date, or he could have been irresponsible, as in the case of other countries in the world, and done some things which were totally unwise. Instead he chose to deal with the issue up-front.

Sir, the reality is, for the majority of Barbadians the National Insurance pension is their only income after retirement. The average person is not able to be involved in investments and real estate, other than the house in which they live. Even if they have one or two houses rented, it would not be enough to maintain them for their lifetime. Therefore, our National Insurance Scheme is a fundamentally important aspect of our public sector arrangement.

Sir, I am pleased that the Honourable Member has indicated that apart from the financial reforms and as far as governance and responsibility are concerned, he would also improve that. They are those, when the economy of the United States of America was booming, who were complaining and saying that the National Insurance Scheme was too conservative and that they should put more money into the stock market in the United States of America to ensure that we could earn fantastic returns. The stock market in the United States has lost trillions of dollars. I do not have anything against investing in the stock market but you have to recognise that the management of a pension fund carries with it a greater responsibility for ensuring the ongoing sustainability of those funds as though you were managing some other discretionary income that you may have, Sir.

Therefore, the reforms which have been advanced by way of ensuring that those of us who are here today are willing to pay just a little more in order to ensure that if we are not, because of our age, the direct beneficiaries, our children and grand children would be able to draw a pension on retirement, I think, is extremely important. I want to salute the Honourable Member for St. Peter for

making this very bold step today to look after the future of our people.

I want to speak to a few aspects of these proposals as they relate to my Ministry. We are very pleased to have been able to have an energy policy which has been able to reduce the cost of living for Barbadians. People do not often recognise that the cost of gasoline at the pump today is lower than it was in the early 1990s. As a matter of fact, even when the price of crude oil rose, this administration was able to lower oil prices. When people in England were rioting, farmers were blocking the streets with their convoys of tractors in long protest and the French people were demanding that their Governments do something about the price of oil, we in this Barbados Labour Party had embarked on the enlightened policy of a reduction of taxes on energy, such that we were able to put back 60 million dollars in the hands of consumers over the past four years of that reform.

Sir, we are not going to stop there. There is the expansion programme of drilling for crude oil which will continue and the \$25 million programme will start immediately for the drilling of nine additional wells in Barbados, will ensure that not only crude oil for export and processing but natural gas as well. We have a programme where we believe that the natural gas used locally must be provided for the comfort and convenience of the consuming public.

Therefore, in a very aggressive and bold move, we are committed to spending an additional \$15 million to provide natural gas for 5 000 consumers in 42 communities across seven parishes. As soon as that programme is completed, we plan to move to the next stage. We will not be content to rest on our laurels because we have 254 miles of natural gas pipes laid across parts of the island, Sir. We recognise that they are still Barbadians who have to suffer the inconvenience of lugging around with their gas bottles. We want to end that situation as soon as possible.

Sir, I am happy to say that my long-suffering constituents in Ealing Park will see the programme that started in 1992 completed to their satisfaction, along with several other areas of the constituency of Christ Church East and other communities all across Barbados.

There is also the necessity to secure our supply of petroleum for years to come. The Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke briefly to the matter of new terminal arrangements. Unfortunately, I do not have the time to develop that point.

8.35 p.m.

Tuesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to let you know that this is a 20-year horizon. Again, looking to the future, this is not for me today or election material only, this is about ensuring that we are able to export the crude that we produce in Barbados and import the aviation fuel, the diesel and gasoline, whilst, Sir, recognising that we have a responsibility to use all our resources to the best effect.

What do I mean, Sir? We have the situation in which we need to utilise all of the land around the area of Hilton Hotel for tourism purposes. It is the only common sense thing to do, Sir, and it is the only way to provide jobs for our people.

Therefore, Sir, the new terminal which is proposed to be constructed in the region of the airport, somewhere between Highway 7, the Pilgrim Road area and the region near to the BADMC, will represent part of that solution.

Sir, I want to deal very quickly with telecommunications. Telecommunication reform has been a key aspect of the need to restructure the Barbados economy and to reposition it to take advantage of the new economy. We need higher telecommunications speed, lower rates and alternative technological solutions for all aspects of business. There are opportunities which exist in call centres with software development, e-commerce and new jobs for our bright young people, Sir, coming out of the Community College, and UWI and elsewhere.

I want to say, Sir, that we are now in a position to issue the request for applications to persons interested in having cellular licences in Barbados. Already, we have received expressions of interests, unsolicited, from some 18 applicants. What is important, Sir, is for us to ensure that anyone who may be interested has that opportunity.

We have already drafted letters of response which we will send to these individuals, along with the package of material which contains all of what they need to apply: the request for a proposal, the application for cellular network carrier licence, the application for service provider licence, application for spectrum licence, copies of the relevant legislation, including the Telecommunications Act, the Fair Trading Commission Act and the Utilities Regulation Act.

This is available and in terms of the process, Sir, that will be publishing in the newspapers. If it is not in the newspapers today, it should be there tomorrow. There will be advertisements letting the public in general and all interested parties know what the procedure would be and I will outline that for you, Sir.

Sir, we want to make sure that there is transparency in this process. As of the 1st November, on the payment of prescribed fees, applicants can collect their package of

material from the Ministry of Economic Development, the Telecommunications Unit. They have two months to formulate their responses, develop their business plans and submit their applications which will be held under lock and key and in the strictest confidence, Sir, to be assessed by a panel.

This panel will comprise of the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Telecommunications, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of commerce, which is the Ministry responsible for utility regulations, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Finance, the Solicitor General and three independent persons with an accounting, economics and telecommunications background.

Sir, that panel, which will act as a kind of Tenders Committee, will access the applications and based on their technical merit, the financial capabilities of the firms, the corporate structure and meeting the requirements that we have set out, the licence will be issued. We want to make sure that we do not issue licences to brokers, who would then walk around trying to find anybody who wants to buy the licence.

One of the key requirements, Sir, is that at least 25 per cent of the shareholding must be local, to be sure that Barbadians are able to participate in this activity, but recognising that because of the capital and technology involved, there may need to be a mix with international partners as well.

Sir, based on those criteria and others, the applications that go forward will be accessed and very shortly thereafter, within a matter of weeks of the closing deadline, the Government will be issuing licences for the operation of cellular telephone services in Barbados.

I want to say, Sir, what our approach has been that on opening the market. There were several different approaches that have been used. We took the approach which is used by Ireland and other places in Europe in which, Sir, on the liberalisation of the market, the only constraint which had to be recognised was that there was a limited amount of spectrum, that is, a limited amount of space in the airwaves for these cellular telephones to operate.

Therefore, Sir, we are prepared to grant up to the limit which can be accommodated in our spectrum, that is, Sir, up to three additional licences can be accommodated, based on the amount of spectrum which we have in Barbados.

Therefore, Sir, I am pleased to make that announcement concerning this Government's follow through on its commitment to liberalise the telecommunications sector and to introduce competition

and to watch those benefits flow to consumers and businesses alike. We look forward to moving onto other phases in that liberalisation process.

Sir, I want to touch on one or two other areas before my time runs out.

On the area of international business, I am pleased to note that, notwithstanding the cloud which continues to hang over the sector based on the new international stipulations, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West pointed out, in terms of new regulations and money laundering, the Homeland Security Bill in the United States and generally, a negative attitude towards the international business sector, that even within that framework, we were still able to show some resurgence.

In the area of international trust, 150 new registrations compared to two last year, an impressive performance by any standard and that is an area in which we have not always had such a happy report to make in the area of insurance, 17 new companies compared to seven last year and we could go on, Sir, but I just really want to assure this Honourable House that we recognise the importance of the international business sector as one of our major foreign exchange earners. We are of the view that, notwithstanding the environment in which we operate, that there is room for substantial growth. We will spare no effort in ensuring that we are able to bring more jobs to the people of Barbados.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John, again in the spirit of electioneering, in the spirit of regaling us with gossip, rumor and scandal, he said a number of things. He said that privatisation means taking public wealth and putting it into private pockets. They tried to suggest, Sir, that there are examples of misappropriation of Government funds. I want to let everyone know, Mr. Speaker, that there is no such thing in existence.

8.45 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I want to let the Honourable Member for St. John know and to let you know, Mr. Speaker, and anyone who might be in my hearing that there is no such thing in existence. The Honourable Member for St. John jumped as well on the matter of the GEMS Project carrying on with the usual stories. In that regard, Sir, I would want to take that up higher. I want to thank the employees in that Project because very often when we listen to the Honourable Member for St. John we would tend to forget that there are over 300 persons who are employed there.

Those over 300 persons would have as their direct dependents, if you average about three dependents per employee, another 1 000 persons depending on them. This brings us back to proper perspective as to why Government will from time to time, and as been indicated in the section of this presentation on state enterprises and our investment programme, invest in public enterprises to ensure that we have the productive capacity to provide opportunity for participation by our people in the economic progress of this country.

The Hilton Hotel will be built at a cost of around \$180 million of Government's money through equity and loan. The Hilton Hotel is a minority shareholder in the project. I, therefore, want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, as you are signalling to me that my time is running out, to thank the employees for their contribution to this project and to say that the Government and certainly the ministry will follow through on the commitments made by the Minister of Finance for putting things in order for privatisation as soon as it is practicable.

Sir, in conclusion, I want to indicate that this package of policies as articulated by the Right Honourable Minister of Finance is set in the context of the stimulation of the economy in the short term to turn the signs of growth into robust and sustainable growth. It is also set in the context of the medium term and the long term for repositioning and restructuring the Barbados economy. The Right Honourable Minister of Finance has been able over the years to skilfully manage the objectives of achieving economic growth with achieving social advancement for our people.

If you want, Sir, to get an indication of how our people have advanced, I can tell you very quickly. If you look at the census results of the year 2000 and look at the difference in the living standards of our people between 1990 and the year 2000 you will get an indication. For example, there was an increase of some 11.2 per cent in the number of dwelling units, houses and apartments in Barbados. There were some 91 406 such units in 2000 as compared to 82 204 in 1990. People, Sir, have started to move in the direction of building more stone houses as opposed to wooden houses. Therefore, you would find that there was an increased of 44.2 per cent. This is due to the great security of tenure in terms of their landholding where there is no need to build temporary accommodation because they do not have to move. Hence, the sale of land by the National Housing Corporation (NHC) and the latest amendment to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, to provide tenants on non-plantation tenancies to be able to acquire the land.

I can also cite another example. There was an increase of 10 000 more households in the year 2000 than in 1990 that had full access to running water in their

homes. That can be attributed to the aggressive programme of the Rural Development Commission (RDC) and the Urban Development Commission (UDC) since 1996, when they were formed, to ensure that we are able to provide assistance to help people to have indoor plumbing in the country and in town and the statistics show it.

Sir, there has been a marked reduction in the number of - you can check the other figures for correlation - Barbadians who still have to use pit toilets, dry facilities. There were only 17 per cent of those in 2000 as compared to 32 per cent in 1990.

Sir, in terms of access to computers and the internet, these are important indicators, in the year 2000, 22 per cent of our households had access to a computer and 14 per cent had access to the internet at home. Of course, with the community technology programme where we are putting computers in the community centres this would increase. So even if you do not have these facilities in your home you will have access to them in the community centres in the same way that the children at schools have access to EduTech.

If you want another indication of how things have changed, in 1990 approximately 37 per cent of households had at least one motor vehicle but in the year 2000 that number jumped to 54 per cent of the households which had a motor vehicle at their door. Therefore, you can see that the policies of this administration are focussing on economic growth on one hand and thus the stimulation of the productive sectors as we have here and on the other hand pushing the social agenda for improving the lives of our people.

The people of Christ Church East would want me to thank the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and Minister of Finance for having that dual strategy. They will benefit from the investments in tourism, from the improvements in agriculture and they will also benefit as is needed from the social programmes of the Government of house repairs, improved roads and improved sporting facilities.

So, Sir, I want to give my fullest support to these very sound measures which are not only geared for what is in it for me today but these measures which look to the future are in the mode of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow and the Right Excellent Sir Grantley Herbert Adams. In the year 2030 and the year 2060, people will still be referring to these far-reaching measures of 2002, in the way that they have positively affected their ability to earn and to maintain their livelihood.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the good and loving people of St. Philip North for giving me this opportunity to speak in this debate today.

I want as well to commend the Honourable Member for St. Peter on his presentation yesterday. I thought, Mr. Speaker, that it was a very mature and responsible presentation. One thing I can say about his presentation is that there was not the slightest inkling or element of recklessness in it as certain people would want him to do.

Having heard the Honourable Member for St. Peter, I am now convinced more than ever that in these very difficult times we are facing that there is no politician more qualified, more equipped or more able to steer us through these stormy waters than the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

8.55 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, these are very trying times. There is a recession all over the world and these are times for astute leadership. These are not times for us to give the reigns of Government back to those who would slash and would cut our salaries.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter did make mention of the EduTech Programme and of the investment which Government has put into this Programme. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John has launched a broad side attack in our EducTech Programme. Sir, I am convinced that this investment in our education would lead to a better educated workforce. I am convinced that it would lead to a more marketable Barbadian worker at the local, regional and international level.

Sir, as an educator yourself, we are facing challenges in education like never before, challenges from which we cannot run away. A lot of what you and I have learned is now useless. Some of the degrees that we have are now useless. That is a fact. Therefore, through EducTech, we are implementing the total change which is necessary for us, in our educational system, to face these challenges about which I am speaking.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like Barbadians to come to grip and to appreciate the various levels of EducTech. EducTech is about the repairing and building of schools. It is about training teachers. It is about changing the curricula in schools. It is about technology. Very often, we at the Ministry of Education have had to preach that EduTech is not only about technology but I beg to differ. Even though I do not want to emphasis the technology aspect of EduTech, I am not going to downplay it because much of our education must be technology-centred. Our

students must be technologically competent because the information age is bigger than Barbados. The workplaces to which our children will go, would be driven by technology and, therefore, we must ensure that our people could perform competently in those workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, recently I was in England and had spoken to a number of Barbadian students who are studying there. I was told by them that their professors communicate with them on line. Their reference books are all on line. The instructions for tomorrow are all on line. The criticism of their papers is also on line.

Sir, the point I am making is that if one leaves Barbados and goes overseas to study and is not technologically literate, then one is going to be at a very serious disadvantage.

Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, make the point that with EduTech we have nothing to be apologetic about. Barbados must throw its hat in the ring or be left behind. If those of us, like you and me, who have responsibility for our children's education, fail to equip our children properly and then they fail, I want it realised that our children have not failed us but we have failed them.

Sir, as the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has said, we have spent millions of dollars on education. Government is the main provider of education to its people. Every child is entitled, at Government's expense, to free primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Sir, we too have benefited from free tuition from Cave Hill Campus and to date, we have to commend our Government because our Government has forever taken the stance that it is going to resist any cost recovery policy in relation to education. Sir, in Jamaica and in other Caribbean islands, those students who access education have to repay Government.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with Barbadians scrutinising the way in which education is being financed in this country. I think it is their right to do so and, in fact, I encourage all Barbadians to ask questions about EducTech. Sir, Barbadians on the call-in programmes have been asking the question, time and time again, as to whether we are getting the returns for our expenditure on EducTech.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Education, let me say publicly that I am satisfied that the money being spent on EducTech is money well spent. There are some, I know, who are watching us and who are watching that project very closely. Some of them are criticising us for undertaking a mammoth but an absolutely necessary task. I urge the critics not to see EducTech as wasted expenditure but to look at what we are aiming to achieve and also to

what we have achieved so far. I have every reason to believe that the results would justify the expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, where the civil works are concerned, let me say that our great grandmothers have been to school at some of the very schools we are now attending. They might have attended there in the year 1902, this is now 2002. Sir, some of those schools might not have been properly repaired since 1902 when our grandparents were going to those schools.

Mr. Speaker, our great grandfathers have been to some of those schools. They have walked on the same floor boards, have leant up against the same wall, have looked at the same ceiling and have also sat under the same roofs. Sir, the point I am making is that Barbados has a very aging school plant and that is nothing for us to boast about.

Another point has to be made that we are not repairing schools in which to put computers but are doing so because we have old, tired and run-down buildings that are being used as schools. Sir, we are replacing all the asbestos roofs in these schools.

9.05 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: We are building ramps and proper toilet facilities at the schools which never had any before, all the refurbished schools will have proper staff rooms and all primary schools will also have staff rooms.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education gets criticised for the late opening of schools at the start of the school year but this must be seen in context of what is happening. For instance, South District School Primary School is beyond repair and must be amalgamated with St. Davids as a new school. In my constituency, St. Marks has to be replaced by a new school because it is beyond repair. Combermere and Christ Church Boys were supposed to be one week of work but instead it took one month to repairs and the list goes on.

The floor at Christ Church Boys took a lot more money than anticipated and the roof is now installed with hurricane straps so that it can be an adequate hurricane shelter.

The asbestos roof at Combermere had to be changed over the entire compound and a new stage had to be put in because it was infested with termites. We also had to rectify the roof at St. James Secondary because it was about to collapse.

Mr. Speaker, it is only during the summer that extensive repairs can be done to these schools. This means we have only eight weeks to do this work and we know that eight weeks is not a long time to repair a school. We instill in contractors the immediacy of the matter, we inform them that we are expecting an early opening and some of them do their best to facilitate us but sometimes it is impossible to do the volume of work needed in time so, very often, the opening of the school is delayed. Sir, secondary schools cannot be accommodated at a church or community centre because we are talking about 1 500 children who must have woodwork departments, home economics rooms and science labs.

Mr. Speaker, I know that no matter how this is politicised, the Barbadian public understands the problem.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on sports. I want sporting associations to realise that Barbadians are no longer accepting the explanation when teams go on a tour that if we lose it is okay and simply put it down to experience for the future because Barbadians have begun to expect success at international competitions.

As far as Barbadians were concerned, Junior Greenidge's medal saved us from embarrassment at the recently concluded Commonwealth Games. Barbadians have touched success so often at these games that they are now expecting success and I want to impress upon national association that any time there is investment at the national level our sportsmen and women have a duty and responsibility not only to themselves but to the taxpayers.

This may sound harsh to sportsmen and women but these associations must instill in them what it means to be a representative at national level and that it is not enough to make the team and go on the trip. They must realise that it is an accomplishment and honour to represent Barbados. Sir, there must be an attitudinal change where our sportsmen and women are concerned.

I want to make the point to national associations that companies will support them financially and otherwise when they are achieving success but we have to put emphasis on the things that will make us worthy competitors. We must be technically competent and physically on par with our opponents at the international level and we have to do extra training or whatever is required to bring us up to an international level.

I have noticed a glaring difference with our netballers when compared with the international teams. Sir, it is the question of height because our players are dwarfs when they stand beside players from England and Australia and if height is our disadvantage we have to do something about it if we want to compete. We have to go around the island on a recruitment drive for taller players and also get

in contact with games teachers at primary schools so that they can encourage taller students to get involved in netball. The other alternative would be for our coaches to show players how to counter the height of the other players.

9.15 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, I applauded the Barbados Cricket Association, (BCA), when they introduced the 10 o'clock start of cricket in the Barbados first division. I appreciated what they were trying to do. I think that they were trying to get our local cricketers accustomed to that 10 o'clock start of game that is used when they are playing the Busta Cup matches. Mr. Speaker, I think that the time has come for them to review that decision. Sir, to my mind, the 10 o'clock start that I initially applauded has done more harm for cricket than good.

Sir, can you imagine St. Catherine's Cricket Club is playing against Maple Cricket Club, you wake up at 7 o'clock, take breakfast and do a few things around the house and it is 8 o'clock. Sir, you have to start getting ready to leave home at 9 o'clock to get to Maple Cricket Club for 10 o'clock. In other words, from the moment you awake you have to think about getting to Maple Cricket Club to start on time. Mr. Speaker, it has ruined cricket.

Sir, there are a lot of things that you cannot do at home in the morning. Therefore, a lot of teams are beginning the game with seven or eight men present. Mr. Speaker, It is not like the days when we used the play cricket when all eleven men would be there.

Sir, people are arriving late for cricket with various excuses and spectators have been turned off by this attitude of players. Another thing that spectators are turned off by is the uncertainty which occurred this year that they did not know whether the match was a knock-out match or the ordinary Barbados Cricket Association first division game. I believe that nothing short of a professional or semi-professional league is going to save our local cricket. Let me tell the Barbados Cricket Association that Government is willing to assist and that hint to the Barbados Cricket Association should be sufficient.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we can have top-class performances in boxing and track and field but we are badly in need of coaches. I expected the coaches from Cuba to be here this week but, perhaps, they would be here next week.

Sir, I listened to the Honourable Member for St. John and I asked myself whether he said anything and

whether he achieved anything. I arrived at the conclusion that he said nothing. Sir, as to whether he achieved anything, I said, yes, because he vowed that if he has to destroy the Democratic Labour Party to get even with certain members, then he would destroy it and he seemed to have succeeded.

Mr. Speaker, it was again a very classic presentation by the Honourable Prime Minister. It was the type of presentation that any person who wants to become a Prime Minister or is aiming to be a Prime Minister should try to emulate the leader. The Leader of the Opposition did not look the part.

I think this has to be one of bleakest days in the history of this Parliament when the Leader of the Opposition can only come to this Honourable House, replying to a Budget, and speak about somebody in bath trunks standing at the end of a jetty with lifeguards coming tomorrow. He said so four times, Mr. Speaker. He also took the opportunity to take the clothes off the Social Partners and referred to them as an extension of the 'How Great Thou Art Choir', which I think is a very disrespectful thing to have done. I think that was in very poor taste.

Mr. Speaker, he also spoke about election timing and the election clock. He seemed to be afflicted by the virus of mental stagnation. His Party, I am sure, expected a performance which would have done something to redress the disgrace that he has brought them.

Sir, as you would know, he is an image maker. His reply is one of style rather than substance and he seemed to be stuck in the realm of trivia. The paradox of it all is, he is telling us how to do our work but he was posted to duty by his Party, to lead them. Mr. Speaker, he picked up his feet and ran without doing his work.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, he threw his Party into a leadership crisis and he walked away as though he had won the Lotto.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Sir, I listened to him and he usually begins by thanking the people of St. John, he did not do it this year. I wonder why he did not do it? He spoke like a prisoner, not a prisoner with bars. He spoke like someone who is hemmed in, a person who needs elbow room, a person without the authority to speak on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party, a person who is not sure as to whether he is Leader of the Opposition or not.

Sir, he was always saying: "Senator Mascoll said," as though he did not have the authority to say it but he

could quote from the leader. The real leader, Senator Mascoll, has already replied to the Budget. I do not know what other Honourable Members in this Chamber expected but I did not expect him to reply today. I thought the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was going to reply.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, it is not adversity which happens to you that test your character. It is how you react to the adversity. He picked up his feet and ran from the leadership.

Sir, you and I prefer to grow in adversity rather than to shrink. The place for a champion cannot be on the canvass. It cannot be on the ground flat on your face. You must show others that you have the capacity and capability to fight on. Mr. Speaker, a good General dies with his boots on and a good Captain goes down with his ship. A Captain should be the last one to go down with the ship and not the first one to jump off. I think that was an act of political cowardice. This is the time, in the history of that Party, to be shepherding the whole process.

Sir, he should be the Hamlet within the play and I think that he should have been the prime participant and leading actor within this political drama. I will never be so presumptuous to tell his Party what to do but I am sure that his reward from them is in keeping with his performance.

Mr. Speaker, in their eyes he is not the relevant to the Party. He was taking them nowhere and he was taking them nowhere too slowly.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: It was no use trying to get him to stay at the dance if he could now dance or if he did not want to dance. He is not relegated to a footnote in the history of the Democratic Labour Party.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, he will go down in the history of the Democratic Labour Party not as the leader who would not but the leader who could not: a leader with a mile of ambition but a quarter inch of ability. I do not know what would be written on his epitaph. Perhaps, what we would see on his epitaph is: Here lies the Honourable Member by name, the captain who jumped ship or here lies the Honourable Member by name, a politician who let down his Party and his country.

Mr. Speaker, let me finish by saying that only He WHO turned water into wine, only He who raised Lazarus from the death could have made a leader out of him. He obviously realised that he had a better chance of winning a

Grammy than he had of becoming Prime Minister. I will not be so presumptuous to say that he is now politically dead but I know that politically he is on life support.

9.25 p.m.

Tuesday, October 23, 2002

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: He obviously realised, Mr. Speaker, that he has a better chance of winning grammy than he has of becoming Prime Minister.

I will not be so presumptuous, Mr. Speaker, to say that he is now politically dead but I know, Mr. Speaker, that politically, he is on life support.

Asides.

Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, Barbadians will not be fooled by any change in Party leadership.

I know a store in Bridgetown, Sir, that has changed its front office but the merchandise remains the same and there was a comedy show recently at the Gymnasium but it cannot match that comedy show at George Street. It cannot match the one on the two Opposition benches in this House.

The Barbadian public has to know that for two full years, these two Honourable Members that they have sent to do their work have sat in these Chambers without saying a single word to each other. Barbadians have to know that it is comedy show.

My advice to the Democratic Labour Party as I sit, Mr. Speaker, is that when you find yourself in a hole, you must stop digging.

I am obliged to you.

Asides.

Mr. DAVID T. GILL: Mr. Speaker, it is not easy to continue in that vein and I would not attempt to because I have not been trained in the legal profession.

First of all, Sir, let me thank those persons from the St. Michael South Central constituency who have called me, over the last 24 hours wishing me well.

Sir, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for a job well done. A performance which I thought could not have outdone last year's Financial Statement and Economic and Financial policies, but in truth and in fact, he was able to outstrip and to outstride his presentation of last year.

If I had to assign a theme to that statement, I would list the words directly from page 102 of the said document which says:

“A new Barbadian economy in a new global economy.”

The presentation, Sir, was modern and contemporary. The Prime Minister addressed issues which occupied the persons, like the Chancellor of the German, he addressed topics of the minds of the Prime Minister of England and the Prime Minister of Canada.

For instance, Sir, matters which pertained to trade, the WTO and the rules which would impact on local trade. He also addressed matters as they refer to harmful taxation as outlined and pronounced by the OECD countries. He also addressed issues which deal with aging and the aging population and social welfare matters, matters which not only occupy but preoccupy the leaders of those countries which reside in the northwestern quadrant of the globe.

Sir, that Barbados is an aging society is evidenced by the pictures of those centenarians which grace the front pages of our daily newspapers on a very frequent basis as they are greeted by and speak with the Governor-General.

Sir, not so long ago, I read an article in the Royal Bank of Canada's quarterly newsletter. It said that Canadians speak about their high standard of living and they do so candidly. They do so without reservation and Sir, they speak openly about this.

I would be so presumptuous as to say that Barbadians speak the same way or in the same style but Barbadians do like to speak about their lifestyle. This Barbados Labour Party administration has given them all reason as to why they should speak about the good life and the good lifestyle.

At times, Sir, this may seem to work against us, as we are deprived of certain concessionary loans and grants as we are graduated to brackets which do not permit us the opportunity to access such soft loans and reasonable facilities.

Sir, whenever the history is written for the first part of this century the success of nations would have rested fairly and squarely on the thresholds of technology and global aggressiveness.

Sir, Barbados must be cognizant of this and Barbados is cognizant of it and the Budgetary or the Financial Statement which was laid in this House yesterday, spoke to such.

Sir, aspects such as an infrastructure, this is the first time ever in the history of Barbados that such an onslaught was made on the road network in Barbados. It tantamounts an infrastructural building exercise but it was criticised in every corner by those who sought to gain cheap political mileage.

The Minister responsible was reviled and put to scorn. He laughed at that he did not know what he was doing and that he had attempted too much work in too short a period of time. Sir, as progress is being made, we can see how it will redound to the benefit of all road users.

I know and I see it because that stip which runs from the Tweedside Road to Pine Road, Collymore Rock junction is a long and medial line of the St. Michael South Central Constituency and it is not that far away from my office and where I reside. I refer to it, Sir, as a Boulevard. I no longer call it Pine Road. Sir, that stip is one where people walk and jog in the early hours of the morning these days without fear of being struck by a vehicle. The sidewalks are accommodating and the children find it a lot easier to handle. In the evening and the late afternoons, people walk and jog along the same stip. I also refer to it as the 'Walcott Every Boulevard', which is my name for that road.

Sir, why the Walcott Every Boulevard, because at the most distal southern end there is a shop. This is a landmark and I am glad that this has not been removed or was asked to be removed. I have heard by parents of families refer to it, Sir, as the Jim Walcott shop. Sir, at the other, the most distal northern end is the residence of the Everies who once lived at that location.

In the words, Sir, or I am going plagiarise part of Teddy Pendergrass' song to the Minister but I am going to change a part. I am going to tell the Minister now, Minister Marshall, 'turn on the lights, not turn off the lights, we do not want any candles'. The biggest problem now on that road is the need for lights, whether it is road lights or the traffic lights. Nonetheless, Sir, I am saying to him it is a job well done.

Sir, in the financial statement it is heartening to see the massive work that will be undertaken in the energy sector.

9.35 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D. T. GILL: This shows that the Minister of Finance is on top of the situation and that he is looking ahead. This shows that he anticipates a possible fuel crisis as energy supplies and prices escalate.

Mr. Speaker, this \$25 million joint venture project which will be undertaken in a matter of days by the Barbados National Oil Company Limited (BNOC) and a company called Waggoner (Barbados) Limited will see the drilling of nine development wells as opposed to exploratory wells. Hence, this project is not about groping in the dark but being decisive and certain about the drilling operations. Although it will not be labour intensive, Sir, it has a lot to redound to the benefit of the country as a whole, economically, financially and environmentally.

Sir, production of crude oil by the barrel should increase by 25 per cent moving it from a production of about 1 200 barrels per day to 1 500 barrels per day which will represent a third of our daily requirement. Not only that, concomitant as drilling is ongoing, natural gas will be part of the findings of the operation. This shows that this is not a willy-nilly put together project because production will move from some 1.8 million cubic feet per day, that is what it is now, to some 2.5 million cubic feet per day of natural gas which is almost a 50 per cent increase.

Sir, the benefits touch some three ways. There will be savings in foreign exchange since the price per barrel of our international crude hovers somewhere between US\$25 to US\$27 per barrel. Once the drilling starts, the finding of natural gas is also associated. This would mean that the requirements for liquid profane gas (LPG) would be down, again a saving in foreign exchange and a drop in cost to the consumer, one goes in tandem with the other.

Not only that, the National Petroleum Corporation is embarking on a \$15 million project which will touch some 5 000 households. To date, I am reliably informed that some 13 000 householders benefit from this service of natural gas. It will touch some 42 areas in some seven parishes and the cost to hook up will drop from \$517 to \$250 which is a reduction of more than half.

Sir, it is going to benefit my constituents. Some time ago the exercise was undertaken in the Observatory RoadClapham area but for reasons best known to the National Petroleum Corporation it was stopped abruptly. I have been reliably informed that this will continue now for some 5 000 to 6 000 feet of pipe which would encompass another 73 houses but the exercise would not stop there.

Villa Road where there was also an abrupt stop years ago will also be part of this exercise. The people there have told me that they have tried incessantly to get it restarted but I am sure that this time around another 66 householders would be included in this exercise as they go across the St. Michael South Central constituency in the Beales Gap, Rollock's Court and the Scott's Gap areas. It will also go beyond that into the constituency of St. Michael South.

Sir, the exercise will not stop there. There are persons who have been hard-done-by at the Fairfield RoadCarrington Village area where again the service was stopped abruptly. I have made representation for them and I am almost certain that they too would be included in this exercise where roads like Gilkes Road, Arthur's Road and Blackman's Road that are without the service will be facilitated this time around. So a cursory glance will tell us that there are at least 161 houses at one end of the constituency and probably another 150 houses at the other end that will be facilitated.

What are the implications of this? When persons state that there is nothing in the Budget for the small man and that it is a Budget which promises, that argument is a thing of naught. The implications are about threefold safety. We often hear of the origins of house fires which stem from poor connections and faulty heads where the liquid profane gas bottles hook up to the rest of the flexi-tube.

Sir, the environmentalists or those who are so disposed will tell you that it also saves the environment of the sulphur. Sir, you may or may not know that wherever there is sulphur there is the present of a heavy metal like lead. Sir, I am sure that you do know that we try to stay away as much as possible from lead and certain heavy metals because the deleterious effects of them are well documented. I do not have to go through them.

Sir, natural gas is kinder to the atmosphere. There is also the savings that will come. You will see people on Sundays and on weekends, particularly on the long weekends, running 'helter skelter' to get a 20 pound bottle of gas. You cannot get the 100 pound bottle of gas on weekends. A 20 pound bottle of gas, I have been informed, is rated somewhere around \$20.97 to \$21.00 without tax and the equivalent to that volume in natural gas is about some \$3.50 almost \$4.00 cheaper.

9.45 p.m.

Wednesday, October 23, 2002

Mr. D. T. GILL: Mr. Speaker, not only that, when one buys a bottle of gas, one buys the contents but when one uses the natural gas that is being pumped to one's house, that persons only pays for the amount used.

Sir, the section that deals with the energy sector is exciting but there is another section which speaks to a \$15 million project which involves the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited where works would be ongoing in three locations. This project, unlike the one referred to previously, would be labour-intensive and would help to decrease the unemployment situation.

Mr. Speaker, the three locations which would be involved are: Holborn, Oistins and a site near the Grantley Adams International Airport. The type of works that would be embarked upon are: new roads would be cut, the area referred to as a green field would be cleared, that area closest to the airport, the right-away for pipe lines and the construction of tanks. This obviously would involve contracting and subcontracting.

Sir, at Oistins, a mooring site would be prepared where a terminal would be built, along with a racking station. I am glad because for a while I have been very concerned about those big tankers which move through our city and suburbs at the peak of day between the 8.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. rush. Sir, if an accident ever happens, it would be another roaring inferno.

Sir, this operation would be undertaken by the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited. I have all reason to believe that they would deliver on time and within budget because of their track record in recent times. They have been given the mandate since 1998 to look after terminaling and they have done so rather efficiently.

I remember not so long ago when some of our local and international trading partners were having infights, et cetera, the same did not occur in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, those three aspects which are being addressed in this Document bear evidence of, not only a Minister of Finance but a Leader who is on top of a situation.

Sir, for sometimes now, we have been getting calls for tax reform, which has also been addressed in this Document. Sir, as you know, tax reform is both progressive and phrased. One cannot interfere with a tax phrase or a tax rate in one fell swoop. We know how we have to address our rates in relation to the Fair Trading Association over a period of time and, therefore, the Minister of Finance must be congratulated for this bold move as he seeks to make it a lot easier on the income of the working population.

This has been done by projecting to decrease the basic and the marginal rates, which would be done year after year with a 5 per cent decrease in the basic and marginal over a period of four years.

Mr. Speaker, for example, take a young person who works for in excess of \$4 000 and who wants to set up a home. Suppose that individual has done enough investment that they could only claim \$15 000 on their taxable income, one would see how progressively, over a four-year period, the measures in this Document would accrue to that persons's benefit.

In this year which is unchanged, my computation shows it would be \$9 570, moving to \$8 965 in the first year where the 2.5 per cent affects the basic rate. In the second year where the other 2.5 per cent is knocked off, brings it down to \$8 360; then as one reduces the marginal rate, there comes a further reduction to \$8 140. In the second year for the decreasing marginal, the individual would have an accessible income of \$7 920. Sir, over a four-year period, a reduction of approximately \$1 650 in the accessible income would be realised.

Sir, this has nothing to do with the house allowance. The house allowance which now stands at \$3 500 per income year 2002, an allowance of \$6 000 would be realised. The difference between the \$3 500 and the \$6 000 at \$2 500 would be claimed on house insurance, something that is so necessary.

Sir, once an individual knows that they could receive some measure of returns, they would go towards the incentive but beyond that, the individual stands to claim another \$10 000 in the year 2004. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, when accumulating, one simply cannot look at the savings from the basic and the marginal rates but also from the other credits such as house insurance and retrofitting of roofs with hurricane straps.

Sir, it is an area which speaks to the future. It is being realistic while lumping all of one's consolidated saving allowance. Sir, it makes computation a lot easier and it is up to the individual as to how they would apportion and allocate their credits.

Sir, the Reverse Tax Credit is another issue. It is time to move swiftly.

I would like to touch on another small but important part of agriculture, that is horticulture. Sir, Barbados is doing well and is winning Gold Award with anthurium and heliconia and people will pay as much as they could afford. The foliage and flower market is also an integral part of the hospitality industry but the mere fact that foliage and flowers are perishable means that there must be a rapid turnover rate.

Sir, we have to look seriously at getting back our export to where it stood in the late 1980s and early 1990s but it must be harnessed with technology of tissue culturing and hybridising and getting the best possible product.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could the Honourable Member conclude please?

Mr. T. D. GILL: Sir, I describe this Budget in three words, simply the best. I am much obliged.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, at this stage I would wish to move that this Honourable House be now suspended until 9.55 a.m. on Thursday, 24th October, 2002.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until Thursday 24th October, 2002, was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

9.55 p.m.

CONTENTS

RESUMPTION

Mr. D.J.H. Thompson, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20; Hon. Miss M.A. Mottley, 6, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26; Hon. O.S. Arthur, 19.

RESUMPTION

Hon. A. P. Wood, 26, 28, 29, 30; Hon. R.R. Farley, 30, 31, 32, 33; Hon. R.N. Greenidge, 35, 36, 37, 38, 42; Mr. D. T. Gill, 38, 39, 40; Mr. T. D. Gill, 41; Hon. Miss M.A. Mottley, 42.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR, Hon. O.S.

EASTMOND, Hon. R.C.

FARLEY, Hon. R.R.

GILL, Mr. D. T.

GILL, Mr. T. D.

GREENIDGE, Hon. R.N.

MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M.A.

THOMPSON, Mr. D.J.H.

WOOD, Hon. A. P.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Opening. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q3. Take-slips, 4.30 p.m. to 9.25 p.m.. Several take-slips are dated 'Tuesday, October 23, 2002' (4.30, 5.20, 6.10, 8.35 and 9.25 p.m.), while the others read 'Wednesday, October 23, 2002'. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Take-slip, 5.50 p.m.. One take-slip reads 'Wednesday, November 23, 2002', presumably October. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Speech labels, Mr. D. T. Gill. The member for St. Michael South Central is labelled 'Mr. DAVID T. GILL' at the start of his speech, 'Mr. D. T. GILL' in the body of it and 'Mr. T. D. GILL' in his closing sentence. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Speech label, Hon. R. R. Farley. His first speech label reads 'Hon. R. R FARLEY' (no full stop after the second initial). Printed as in the source.

Q7. Suspension of Sitting, 7.45 p.m.. The Sitting was suspended until 7.45 p.m.; the take-slip immediately before the RESUMPTION heading reads '7.00 p.m.' and the next one '7.55 p.m.'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Wednesday, 23rd October, 2002, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair, for the debate on the Budgetary Proposals and Financial Statement presented the previous day by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Member for St. Peter. Mr. Speaker reminded the House that the Honourable Member for St. John had 2 hours, 33 minutes, the length of television time taken by the Prime Minister.

Mr. D. J. H. Thompson, the Member for St. John, opened the reply by picturing the Minister on a jetty promising lifeguards 'next week' to people already drowning, and argued that the Government's inaction

towards those most in need was a deliberate policy. He contended that emergency measures announced in August 2001 had taken more than fourteen months to implement, and listed earlier promises not yet fulfilled: liberalisation of telecommunications, an Employment Protection Bill, a Pension Benefits Bill, a \$5 million Innovations Fund and the consolidation of lotteries. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley rose on a point of order to say that she had certified the regulations he referred to and that they had been signed. He criticised the GEMS Project run through Hotels and Resorts Limited as a means of avoiding parliamentary scrutiny, said that the cost of EduTech 2000 had risen from \$350 million to \$426 million with a further \$76 million now proposed, and asked for the auditors' report on Gas Works 2000. After a point of order from Hon. O. S. Arthur on the calling of elections, he argued that relief for taxpayers had been postponed to suit the electoral timetable and that the Budget had nothing in it for the average Barbadian.

Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley replied that the Budget reflected responsible leadership in a period of international uncertainty. She contrasted 1991, when 4 000 public servants were sent home and unemployment reached 27 per cent, with an unemployment rate now of 10 per cent, up from 9.3 per cent. She spoke of the financing institutions created for small enterprises, over \$14 million provided in the 2002-2003 Budget, the backlog of more than 4 000 cases in the Magistrates Court and about 90 at the Assizes, and a new Immigration Bill to come in the next year. After Mr. Speaker told her that her time had expired she concluded briefly, and the Sitting was suspended until 7.45 p.m.

On resumption, Hon. A. P. Wood called the Opposition Leader's effort the worst in the history of Budget debates since Independence and listed achievements in agriculture, including the special safeguard mechanism, the land for the landless programme launched in October 2001 and the first major irrigation project since the mid-1980s, before thanking his constituents in St. Philip South. Hon. R. R. Farley, the Member for Christ Church East, defended the tax reform measures as restructuring the economy for the post-2005 period, denied that the Budget was aimed at an election and spoke of using the land around the Hilton Hotel for tourism.

Hon. R. N. Greenidge, the Member for St. Philip North, defended the investment in EduTech, describing the building of ramps, toilet facilities and staff rooms at schools and the reasons for late school openings, and spoke of the leadership crisis in the Democratic Labour Party. Mr. D. T. Gill, the Member for St. Michael South Central,

welcomed a \$25 million joint venture between the Barbados National Oil Company Limited and Waggoner (Barbados) Limited to drill nine development wells, raising crude production from about 1 200 to 1 500 barrels a day, and a \$15 million project involving the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited; he described the Budget as ‘simply the best’.

Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley then moved that the House be suspended until 9.55 a.m. on Thursday, 24th October, 2002, seconded by Hon. R. N. Greenidge, and Mr. Speaker suspended the Sitting accordingly.