
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, July 8, 2003

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, July 8, 2003.

PRESENT

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

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

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

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, B.C.H. (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

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

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

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Public Works and Transport)

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL (Chairman of Committees)

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

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

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

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

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

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

Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.Phil, J.P. (Minister of Energy and Public Utilities)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc., J.P. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

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

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT, M.B., B.S. (Edin.), F.R.C.S., J.P. (Minister of Health)

Mr. R. D. JONES, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Ed.), J.P.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL, B.Sc. (Econ.) (Hons.), M.A. (Public Finance) (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C., (Minister of Industry and International Business)

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.)

Dr. W. F. DUGUID, B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S., FDRCS, J.P.

Mr. R. L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A.

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, June 24, 2003.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the Minutes of Tuesday, June 24, 2003 have been circulated, and subject to any amendments or observations, I beg to move that these Minutes be adopted.

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

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

PAPERS

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Honourable Member for St. Peter, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Income Tax Order, 2003;
2. Value Added Tax (Refund) (Cousin Hill Farms Limited) Order, 2003.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: I am commanded to lay the following:

Annual Report of the Child Care Board for the year April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the following Bill was read a first time:

Final Appropriation (2002-2003) Bill, 2003.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the rest of this day's Sitting.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, we, on This Side, do not propose to bring any substantive Government Business before this Honourable Chamber today, instead, we propose that the item under Private Members' Business brought by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East be continued.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS – *Cont'd*

RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE THRONE SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL AND OF THE DETERMINATION OF THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS REFERRED TO THEREIN

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the Throne Speech which, in my opinion, outlined in a very definitive and comprehensive way, the Government's intended programme for the next five years, or for the life of this term.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put the Throne Speech in the form of a contextual framework. In order for me to do so, I have to ask the indulgence of this Honourable Chamber to do a quick review of this Administration's style of economic and political management so as to set the stage for this Party's strategic vision for this economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us sometimes to look back, because as we seek to chart a course for the way forward, we need to see where we have come from; what are the things we have done quite successfully; what are the things that we could have done a little better and what it is we need to do to reposition the economy so as to give all Barbadians a sense of assurance that the macroeconomic performance of this economy can continue in such a way that the quality of life we have been accustomed to can actually be protected.

Mr. Speaker, there is a school of thought in this country that the memories of Barbadians are short, and that the things which Barbadians had to endure over a specific period which have affected them greatly, could somehow be easily erased from their minds, and that because of our shortsightedness, we might want to make decisions which are not in the best interest of ourselves. However, if we continue to avail ourselves of the right information, we would, at all times, seek to make decisions which, at the end of the day, could be considered sound and just.

Mr. Speaker, I want quickly to do a comparison of what transpired between 1986 and 1994, and how we were able to deal with the management of this economy between 1994 and 2003. This will set the stage for the design of this Throne Speech, and why it is that the Government would have structured a macroeconomic and social programme as is contained in this Throne Speech, that Barbadians in very large numbers would have accepted not very long ago that this is the Party they should support.

The period 1986 to 1994, especially the latter part, was characterised by extremely poor economic management. We had successive years of negative growth in the early 1990s. There was a massive erosion of our foreign exchange reserves. The period 1986 to 1994 was also characterised by unprecedented levels of unemployment. The unemployment figure rose to an astronomical level of 27 per cent in the early part of the 1990s. That period was also characterised by a level of social and economic deprivation which resulted in many families being dislocated in very major ways. There was also an erosion of Barbadians self-confidence and self-esteem.

All of us will remember quite easily, the presence of an international financial institution which virtually dictated our social and economic policy. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was pretty much in town in the early part of

the 1990s. We all remember the cut in the civil servants' pay, the famous eight per cent. We also remember the cut in the severance payment entitlements and the introduction of some backward social policies which saw reduced allocations to those agencies providing social services. For example, the allocations to the welfare agencies were cut at a time when more and more persons were made to become more dependent on such agencies.

In short, Mr. Speaker, by mid-1994, our cherished country was reduced to horse racing jargon, the category of 'the also ran.' That is what happened. At that time I was still a member of the University of the West Indies staff functioning in the Economics department. We had to take our rounds in the regional economy. So I know the pain and the suffering that I certainly had, having to be subjected to the ridicule by many a colleague of mine about Barbados' economic mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, there was even a threat to our treasured currency, but glad to say, that is a thing of the past.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to remind this Chamber that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would have been an architect in designing the policies which resulted in much pain and suffering of the people in the early 1990s. That is a thing of the past and I am happy for the Barbadian people that they have turned to the Barbados Labour Party and were properly delivered. One of the ways in which they were delivered was strong macroeconomic performance, sustained for about eight years. It was then interrupted by the downturn which was occasioned by the events of 11th September, 2001, and a weakened international economy.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: On a point of order. I would want to remind the Honourable Member for St. Philip South that he is falsely misleading this Honourable House when he is quite aware that the Annual Statistical Digest and the Central Bank's Report, 2002 to 2003, have clearly indicated that the best performance we have had in terms of our trading and non-trading sector performances was the ending of 1994. Subsequent to 1994, there has been a systematic decline in that annual performance until recession occurred at the end of 1999.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, if I needed to give the Honourable Member for St. Philip West some degree of credit for making that intervention, I would do it this way. I would begin by thanking him for reminding this Honourable House that by the end of the financial year 1993 to 1994, the Barbados Labour Party was in power and would have been for about six months.

I would also like to correct the Honourable Member for St. Philip West. I think that in future the Honourable

Member would be well advised to become involved in matters in which he might have some competency. The fact remains that if one is talking about strong economic performance between 1994 and the financial year, 2000 to 2001, this economy would have experienced positive growth on a sustained basis.

As I said earlier, the events of 11th September, 2001, and the weakening of the international economy would have seen an economic downturn during the financial year, 2001 to 2002. That continued into the first part of 2002 to 2003, then there was a restoration of the enhanced economic performance in the latter part of the financial year 2002 to 2003.

Mr. Speaker, during the Barbados Labour Party's Administration, 1994 to 2003, quite unlike what the economy had experienced under the Democratic Labour Party regime, we saw the introduction of some enlightened and progressive social policies, all designed to ensure that social justice occurred alongside enhanced economic performance. That is, the economic gains were used to restore the social fabric which was decimated by the Democratic Labour Party's Administration during the first part of the 1990s.

During that period, Mr. Speaker – and you would have benefitted from the establishment of institutions designed specifically to fast-track the delivery of services to those elements and segments of the population that required them most – one would have seen the establishment of both the Rural and Urban Development Commissions, and I would say no more because the performance of those two institutions would have spoken for themselves.

Sir, this information is all contained in a document called the **Barbados Review**, which basically is a collection of our achievements during the years 1994 to 2003 which, in a very packaged form, would have given Barbadians the information they required in order to have made that very informed decision.

Mr. Speaker, during that period there was also greater attention paid to skills acquisition and building the stock of human capital. When we looked at the enrollment at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, it had virtually doubled. Enrollment at the university would have indicated there was an increase in the intake of students. There were massive increases of persons who were taking the skills training programmes at the various centres in this country. We also saw the commencement of the EduTech Programme and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East would have treated us to a status report on the EduTech Programme two weeks ago in this Honourable Chamber, which generated healthy discussions on the way forward for education.

During that period, 1994 to 2003, and particularly during the second term, there were unprecedented levels of development in this country with respect to road improvements and additions to our housing stock. Another thing is that this Government was even in a position to repay the eight per cent wage cut which the other Administration saw fit to cut from the civil servants in this country.

When I was Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, we saw the introduction of the Land for the Landless Programme. We know the strategic importance of making land available to persons who have a passion for agriculture but cannot avail themselves with parcels of land in order to do so.

We saw the introduction of the Agricultural Development Fund. It was said that the agricultural sector needed a dedicated line of financing to help with the re-engineering, retooling and recapitalising that were important and are still important to the sector. During that term we also saw, in an unprecedented way, an upgrade and expansion of the market infrastructure in this country.
10.40 a.m.

I also want to remind Barbadians that this Administration is mindful of the fact, notwithstanding what was achieved in the 1994 to 2003 period, that the times ahead will challenge all available resources in this country because we are moving into a world that is characterised by fierce competition and there is a great level of uncertainty which pervades the regional and international economies. One of the things we are certain about is that Barbados' place in the new regional, hemispheric and international economy is in no way assured. We have to find our place in that economy, prepare properly for our involvement in trade and financial arrangements and this is why our resources will be severely challenged in the times ahead.

Sir, we went to the people a few months ago, presented our Manifesto to them and told them that the future would be a challenging one, that this Administration in 1994 had to rescue this economy and that we will take the country forward despite the challenges ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we have to come to terms with the new trading arrangements and introduce proper programmes to minimise dislocation to certain industries and sectors while at the same time taking advantage of the opportunities for Barbados. In this connection, this Administration will be seeking to introduce policies to facilitate economic expansion through the export of Barbadian technology, intellectual and financial capital, enterprises, brands and the products of our cultural industries.

Mr. Speaker, in a nutshell, this Throne Speech is about the Barbados Labour Party Administration continuing its efforts to build a highly competitive economy because this is

the only way this economy and those who live in it will prosper.

This Administration will continue to provide financial and technical assistance, capacity building and institutional support to assist existing Barbadian producers to reach and maintain world standards and to create a new set of competitive enterprises.

We accept that those of us who live in this country cannot set the internationally accepted standards for goods and services if we look at the negotiations in the context of FTAA or WTO. Sir, in the context of multilateral trade negotiations those standards will be determined as a result of the multilateral discussions which are going on in the theatre of negotiations.

If we look at the Throne Speech, this Administration, notwithstanding the uncertainty that might pervade the regional international and hemispheric economy, has committed itself to a continuation of sound, macro-economic and social policies. On page 5 of the Throne Speech we have set some stiff targets to recommit, refashion and refocus ourselves in order to reach these targets of achieving an annual average real economic growth of three per cent, in pursuit of the overall objective of reducing unemployment to negligible proportions.

Sir, we are also committed to reducing the fiscal deficit to manageable proportions. This is important for economies such as ours because there is this inextricable link between the fiscal deficit and the balance of payments in small open economies. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would know this because he was part of a design team which saw a massive explosion in the fiscal deficit and total disruption of our foreign reserves to the point where we had only \$11 million in reserves.

Sir, we know the importance of maintaining fiscal prudence and we are committed because this economy cannot afford to be reckless in the use of public finances in this country.

We are also committed to reducing the public debt to 60 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, pursuing a low interest rate policy and low energy prices policy because we need to give the economy a chance to find its way in the regional and hemispheric economy which would be fiercely operated.

Mr. Speaker, to achieve these targets all Barbadians will have to embrace and support Government's economic and social programmes because as competition becomes more fierce at home we need to reposition and re-engage the spirit of competitiveness to make sure we are able to

increase the number of highly competitive industries in this country so as to minimise the dislocation that will come about as a result of trade liberalisation and globalisation which will allow us to take advantage of the opportunities which will present themselves as a result of those processes.

Mr. Speaker, all the measures which we intend to introduce over the next five years will not win favour with all Barbadians but this Government in this Throne Speech and through the design and implementation of measures that flow from this speech will have to be prepared to remove all bottlenecks to entrepreneurial development. Also, the bureaucratic inertia that exists in many Government institutions will have to be removed and the administrative encumbrances to doing business in this country will have to be dealt with. Mr. Speaker, there must be a more professional approach to work especially by some civil servants.

10.50 a.m.

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, this document sets out clearly the Government's programme for tax and physical reform, which will be one of the cornerstones in competitiveness in this country. It speaks to designing a tax system to accommodate the full effects of trade liberalisation and ensuring that we enter into the Caribbean Single Market and Economy arrangement. Barbados will be a preferred location for doing business. This document speaks to how we will achieve the structure of the income tax; it places emphasis on the importance of effecting reform in the telecommunication sector; achieving a low energy price regime as a way of putting as little burden as possible on businesses and consumers; removing any threat to our development and making sure that entities like the Barbados Water Authority are able to come to terms with what is required by the management of this valuable resource so that it does not retard our development efforts.

Mr. Speaker, this document also speaks to the reform that is necessary in the agriculture sector so as to utilise the resources in that sector in such a way that things that the sector cannot afford to continue with into the future, that process of rationalisation takes place and we stay with those things for which the sector could compete. It also speaks to continuing the process of reform in the manufacturing sector to make sure that we are able to have industries in those countries which can hold their own in Barbados, the region and help with our exports extra-regionally.

Sir, I am going to use the limited time that I have available to remind this Honourable Chamber and those persons outside of this Chamber that this Throne Speech details the Government's programme for the next five years. It is based on very determined objectives. These objectives

are spelt out in the first quarter of the speech but it can be seen as a continuation of the work that was started when the Barbados Labour Party was called upon to rescue this economy. As we go forward, we recognise that the environment will be characterised by significant changes. Sir, we have to be nimble and willing to fashion our economic policies to ensure that we are responding to circumstances which we will be called upon to function.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your leniency and I commend this Throne Speech to this Honourable House.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to add some information to this Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, I want, at the outset, to say how eternally grateful I am for this wonderful privilege to have been given the mandate by the people of St. Thomas to represent their interest in this Honourable Chamber. Indeed, I would wish with this privilege to ensure that I fulfill that mandate so that the people of St. Thomas will continue to get the benefits that they so deserve as a result of their continued commitment to the Barbados Labour Party by giving us resounding victories in that constituency every time.

Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Thomas are very wise and I ensure that as long as this Barbados Labour Party continues to work in fulfilling the pledges and policies that we have put forward, I am sure that we will continue to gain success not only in St. Thomas but, indeed, the rest of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party is known for having offered outstanding service to Barbados for many years and the mandate that was given on May 21, 2003 speaks volumes of the commitment that the Barbados Labour Party has, the dedication and confidence that the public of Barbados has put in the Barbados Labour Party to carry on its business.

Sir, I am not going to refer to the past because I believe that the Barbados Labour Party has left a legacy in this country and it has done a lot for the people with the taxpayers money. However, I would wish to speak of the period 1994-2003 where the people of Barbados have seen performance which is second to none when it comes to projects and programmes that have been instituted and which will continue as a result of the information that is registered in this Throne Speech.

Sir, I can speak of the poverty alleviation programme that was started and which we cannot stop. They are poor people who are working for an opportunity to have their homes repaired; to get spots to put their homes on and to get welfare homes.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, this Barbados Labour Party can do it. We will continue to live up to our motto that says, "A better life for our people", and, indeed, the most recent one which says, "Every Bajan A winner". We believe that the poor and downtrodden must continue to have an opportunity in Barbados.

Sir, in 1994 we spoke of job number one being jobs and we have been able to fulfill that mandate to the extent that unemployment dropped to single digits. I think that is a profound performance and, therefore, we will continue to work towards employment for Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, housing solutions is yet another aspect that we can speak proudly of which will continue in Barbados under this Barbados Labour Party because we believe that people should be empowered. Ownership is important, especially ownership of a house spot, and it is a result of the performance of this Barbados Labour Party, that thousands of Barbadians would have benefitted from house spots, housing and a number of opportunities offered by the National Housing Corporation and, indeed, the Ministry of Housing and Lands. The Barbados Labour Party will continue to work assiduously to look after these individuals.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central spoke, two weeks ago, about the EduTech Programme. Sir, it is a pity that he did not direct some of his concerns to the information technology expert at the schools and to the Ministry of Education. I think that would have been a good way to go, because we need to continue to have dialogue with teachers and others who are actively and intimately involved in EduTech, and in any other programmes that the Ministry of Education offers, because that is the way that the world goes.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak boldly of a visit made by the then Opposition Leader, and a team comprising of individuals from the Democratic Labour Party, sometime in early 2001, who were taken on a tour of the schools to see what was happening in the EduTech programme. I think that was a mature step because the Opposition is part of the Government and they need to be aware, as any other Barbadian, of what is happening with the various projects which the taxpayers' money goes towards.

I can assure you, Sir, that the comments coming from that Honourable Member then, indicated that the EduTech project was an excellent one which will help Barbadians to become more current, and would put them on the cutting-edge of technology in this globalised world which we are moving towards.

I was extremely disturbed, Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign to have read comments coming from some Honourable Members, now on the Other Side, who spoke

about dismantling the project. I think, Sir, that is one of the reasons why Barbadians have voted against them, because they cannot imagine that in these times, when everybody is going forward in the world, a Party comes to say that we are dismantling a project. Sir, that not only speaks to the computerisation, but to the teachers' appraisal and curriculum reform that are so necessary, if Barbadians are to remain current.

Mr. Speaker, you know, and others in here are aware, that other countries in the Caribbean and the rest of the world are extremely excited about the EduTech programme. They praised us for getting it done with such limited resources, and said that it is a visionary aspect in our development. Therefore, I have difficulty with hearing that we will dismantle EduTech.

Mr. Speaker, what would happen to our poor people, because they are the ones who will benefit when the technology reaches the classroom. As the situation is today, Sir, the people of Barbados are getting opportunities to work in the community projects at the Community Resource Centres, because that empowers them. When their children come home with the laptops and are doing homework, the Community Resource Centres will go a long way, in preparing the parent to work with their children in homework.

Mr. Speaker, EduTech is not only about technology, it is also about the civil works which is one of the major components of the whole exercise. Sir, I will not delve too deeply into it, since the Minister of Education spoke on the issue two weeks ago, except to say that the Democratic Labour Party never treated education in the same way, because we came and found schools that were falling apart.

The Honourable Member for St. John knows of the Hothersal School that was ready to collapse, when we were in office in 1995-1996, and it had to be closed. Sir, St. Bartholomew's School had a wide gap, and I could see it endangering the lives of the people there, and those are decisions this Government had to take, then, to ensure that every year, the EduTech programme and the domestic programme were looked after, and that schools were upgraded and repaired. I felt deeply hurt.

Mr. Speaker, even though this document is not a document of this Honourable Chamber, I am willing to leave it here today because these are the voices of the people in Barbados, the children and the teachers in the schools who are speaking about the EduTech programme. We are now into Phase 3 of that programme.

Sir, while we agree that as a result of challenges when the civil works are being done, it pushed back the programme, and there were cost overruns – because one did

not anticipate the problems with the repairs – I want to say that the children of Barbados and others are extremely overwhelmed with this programme. If you would allow me, Mr. Speaker, I just want to read comments from some students in the programme.

The topic is: “What difference does EduTech mean to you.”

This young man called, Dennis, whose full name I would not call, says,

“Learning is more interesting and you have bigger rooms, more space and a little more freedom.”

Mr. Speaker, that is one of our school children speaking. It is not a child of a Barbados Labour Party person or a Democratic Labour Party person, but a child who has a free mind and will and wants to comment about the EduTech project.

Mr. Speaker, another child called, Andrew who is only at primary level, and he is saying:

“I am able to gain more knowledge and learn more things. My spelling, mathematics and English have improved.”

Then, there is a teacher, Mr. Speaker, whose persuasion we do not know, but who spoke of the EduTech programme. This teacher said,

“It has made me more interested in teaching and more efficient. As a result, I enjoy teaching more. Also, the use of technology has helped to enhance my skills.”

Mr. Speaker, I will leave this as a document of the House.

Sir, I want to go on to look at the youth affairs department because it has been doing excellent work and while I agree, to some extent, that there may not be the direct communication from the youth commissioners, I can speak of the importance those youth commissioners have been playing. I will not call any of them by name because that is unimportant, right now but, I can tell you that those youth commissioners, especially through the youth development programme, have been making tremendous changes in the lives of Barbadians. There are documents here again, Mr. Speaker, which I can make documents of the House, so that Honourable Members can get an opportunity to delve through them and see the work.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak of their performance because I came to this Honourable House with a community background. I am a community-minded person and,

therefore, I can speak of the work done by the youth commissioners. Some Honourable Members, perhaps, would not have that direct contact with their communities and, therefore, would not be able to speak with the same measure of understanding and experience as I would, but I can say, Sir, that the youth development programme has been able to make a tremendous change in the lives of many young people.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central spoke about the youth at risk. The Youth Affairs Department has been working with a ‘block’ committee, and they have found employment for the youth with the Land for the Landless project. I know that one is in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. John, at Bath. There is one at Mount Wilton, and there is another one at Ellerton in St. George. Sir, all of that developed, as a result of the youth commissioners, going into the communities and finding out what are some of the things that the youth need. Mr. Speaker, many of them are of the opinion that nobody cares about them, and they were taken away from the system and left wondering around on the ‘block’.

11.10 a.m.

The youth commissioners have been working on sporting projects within the various communities. Every year we work towards getting at least 3 000 of our young people involved in those projects. This is not done in any ‘airy-fairy’ manner. A tracer survey is done and dialogue takes place with the young people to find out what they want to do, not what the Government wants to put on them. Therefore, the idea that they come up with, is not my idea or the idea of any Honourable Member within the Chamber, but it is the idea from the young people saying what they want to do.

I know of the excellent work that is being done and I want to commend all of the people in the youth department and the other individuals in Barbados who are working with non-governmental agencies and other community groups, who volunteer their time, their services and their resources for free. Many more people should offer their time and their service because that is the only way that Barbados can continue to be the country that will make the difference. So I want to thank the youth department and the other agencies, non-governmental and otherwise, for their continued support in this respect.

Every year there is an average of about 22 summer camps that the Youth Affairs Department manages across the length and breadth of Barbados. Parents are crowding the department to have their children enlisted in them because it is important that we give our children opportunities to learn about their country and their heritage

not anticipate the problems with the repairs – I want to say that the children of Barbados and others are extremely overwhelmed with this programme. If you would allow me, Mr. Speaker, I just want to read comments from some students in the programme.

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The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central spoke about the youth at risk. The Youth Affairs Department has been working with a ‘block’ committee, and they have found employment for the youth with the Land for the Landless project. I know that one is in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. John, at Bath. There is one at Mount Wilton, and there is another one at Ellerton in St. George. Sir, all of that developed, as a result of the youth commissioners, going into the communities and finding out what are some of the things that the youth need. Mr. Speaker, many of them are of the opinion that nobody cares about them, and they were taken away from the system and left wondering around on the ‘block’.

11.10 a.m.

The youth commissioners have been working on sporting projects within the various communities. Every year we work towards getting at least 3 000 of our young people involved in those projects. This is not done in any ‘airy-fairy’ manner. A tracer survey is done and dialogue takes place with the young people to find out what they want to do, not what the Government wants to put on them. Therefore, the idea that they come up with, is not my idea or the idea of any Honourable Member within the Chamber, but it is the idea from the young people saying what they want to do.

I know of the excellent work that is being done and I want to commend all of the people in the youth department and the other individuals in Barbados who are working with non-governmental agencies and other community groups, who volunteer their time, their services and their resources for free. Many more people should offer their time and their service because that is the only way that Barbados can continue to be the country that will make the difference. So I want to thank the youth department and the other agencies, non-governmental and otherwise, for their continued support in this respect.

Every year there is an average of about 22 summer camps that the Youth Affairs Department manages across the length and breadth of Barbados. Parents are crowding the department to have their children enlisted in them because it is important that we give our children opportunities to learn about their country and their heritage

and to use the skills they have developed in music and in the performing arts in order for them to be able to make the difference.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) which caters to individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 has been speaking volumes when it comes to the training of young people and helping them to develop their businesses.

The Youth Business Trust work hand in hand with the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme to ensure that young people who have business ideas will get an opportunity to be able to work with them in a real way to make the difference, because we are forever telling our young people that black people are not good at business. The Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme is showing that is quite the opposite.

As long as they come with the business idea, they will get assistance in pointing them in the right direction. Another agency will be the mentor to these young people and will give them a chance to be able to market their products and to do some accounting and other skills that are necessary if the business is to become viable.

There is a Junior Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme which was started in the schools. An additional eight schools have been added to the YES Junior to ensure that primary and secondary school students get an opportunity to learn what it is like to save and how important it is to get actively involved in a co-operative society.

Mr. Speaker, the Youth Affairs Department, has a programme targeting youth at risk. This programme, Youth Achieving Results, specifically work with young people who are talented in music and arts. It is a joy to see the kind of end product that these young people have been able to develop when it comes to the performance in the music and the arts as well as to using their skills to make things. Quite a large number of these young people have been able to pursue that programme and have been able to get gainful employment.

I want to touch on the Barbados Youth Service and another aspect of education to do with the Alma Parris School. I say this specifically because I want the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central to remember that when he was President of the Barbados Union of Teachers, we had talked about this school. The abbreviation that would have been coming from that school, the Alternative Assistance School, was turned into another expression, 'ASS', and that hurt us. That destroyed the school from the inception, but as God is alive today, the Alma Parris School is making a tremendous difference in the lives of those children who are underachievers and late developers.

The Alma Parris School has such a wonderful programme that is different and second to none when it comes to dealing with children at that level. Some of those children did not even write the Common Entrance

Examination, but as long as they are drafted into that school, it carries a roll of about 250, they get a chance from third form to go on a school-to-work programme where one day per week they go to a hotel and do catering and they do baking. They also go to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to get involved in developing skills in agriculture. They also go to boat builders in the community and learn how to do boat building. There is a whole range of activities in which they are involved.

Mr. Speaker, their graduation was held last Monday and I had the opportunity to attend it. The young people who graduated from that school have now been given permanent employment as a result of that kind of apprenticeship programme from within the school.

Therefore, I want to recommend that this be replicated across the length and breadth of Barbados because we must cater to our children who are late developers and underachievers in the same way that we are catering to the average student as well as those who are gifted.

Mr. Speaker, plans have already been made for a similar school at the St. Giles Senior School. There is a school in the north and there should be one in the centre of the island because too many of our children are pushed aside because they are not sharp enough to pick up the skills and every parent is not as caring to be looking after the needs of the children. It is much the same with some teachers. They do not quite understand them because they are trained to deal only with children who are average and gifted.

I come now to the Barbados Youth Service. We all know that there are hundreds of young people out there who are not so sure what they want to do for the future. There are many who would say, I want to be a psychologist, a tiler or whatever, but then there are many others who, because they have not got the training from home and have not been involved in any community group – that is as a result of the survey we have done in 1995 where five out of every ten young people had no involvement in any community group – do not have the focus, the community strength, the role models and the leaders all the time to point them in the right direction. Therefore, the Barbados Youth Service is an institution that I commend to any parent in Barbados.

The Barbados Youth Service suffered terribly between 2000 and 2001 when some calypsonians tore it to the ground by singing songs like, if you want to learn how to use drugs, go to the youth service, if you want to get pregnant, go to the youth service and all kinds of negatives we were hearing in Barbados. People who I expected to know better were some of the ones who were doing it. These are some of the ones who, if they were not pointed in a direction by a teacher

Mr. Speaker, before closing, there is one other aspect which I would like to commend to this Honourable House in relation to the Throne Speech, which is the Before-School-Care Programme and After-School-Care Programme. We see and hear of situations where children are being taken away from schools. In Barbados, many of our children are being physically and sexually abused and, therefore, the Before-School-Care and After-School-Care Programmes are programmes which I am sure stakeholders would want to work with Government because children are now being dropped off at schools sometimes as early as 6.00 a.m., and are left unattended until the janitor or another parent arrives at the school.

This programme is one that I think would help our young children to remain on the school's compound in the morning, under the supervision of an adult, particularly an unemployed parent. I am sure there are persons who would wish to offer a stipend to a parent who stays at school in the morning to receive and to supervise a child in the morning and to stay with them in the afternoon from 3.00 p.m. to perhaps 5.30 p.m., to be able to look after the needs of those children. At least parents would know that the children would be at the schools under the supervision of an adult. This is something that could be developed and I trust that the Barbados Union of Teachers would buy into it.

I am distressed that one of our principals, who I expected should have known better, has spoken about taking the children to the police station if they are not collected by 3.30 p.m., but I know that it is being practised across a number of schools.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that this would cause parents from the rural communities to keep their children in rural schools, where the quality of education is just as good or better, to allow those children to be able to participate in any extra-curricular activities and to get the real feel of school in the community, in which the child resides.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that as long as the stakeholders work with us in our consultations and as long as there are opportunities for them to observe, across the length and breadth of this country our young children would be involved in the Before-School-Care and After-School-Care programme, under the supervision of parents, retired teachers and others. I am sure it would help to make the difference in the quality of children that we are now raising because it is in these formative years that children begin to inculcate habits or positive attitudes towards whatever they do. As long as we do that, it would permeate the rest of the educational system.

Sir, in closing, I would like to say how grateful I am to civil servants who have continued to work assiduously in helping Government put these programmes in place that redound to the benefit of Barbadians at all levels. I think it

is important that these groups, including non-Governmental Organisations and others, must be highly lauded for the efforts they have given, not only to this Administration but to the former Administrations that have served Barbadians.

I am confident that in the same way they have worked with us in the EduTech (Education Sector Enhancement Programme), at the Alma Parris School, the PEACE Programme or the CHECKS Programme, where the children are exposed to the cultural and historical activities such as the Barbados Landship, stilt-walking and others, I am confident that they will continue to work with us to achieve some of the goals that are outlined in the Throne Speech. I am obliged to you, Sir.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the Throne Speech. I will start where the Honourable Member for St. Thomas ended. As you know, within St. Lucy, there is the St. Lucy Primary School which I believe is part of the EduTech programme.

I want to start by telling the Minister of Education that the St. Lucy Primary School should not be repaired. It should be relocated from the present site and taken further south because we can no longer have a situation where a secondary school and primary school are on the same compound. We must bear in mind that students attending the St. Lucy's Secondary School are strangers to the culture and I am suggesting that Government does not waste money to repair the primary school but find money to do capital expenditure instead of revenue expenditure. Sir, I have said that EduTech is a programme that has been able to convert revenue expenditure to capital expenditure, and we should complement the programme, by spending money on capital expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech should be dealing with the vision of how we plan to make Barbados better. It should not be used to rehash what happened in the election campaign but should put us in a better position to operate in the world.

I have been saying in this Parliament for a long time that the Caribbean is ten years behind the world and that we are now trying to develop our economies from a home base. We should have been dealing with globalisation a long time ago instead of four Caribbean leaders now sitting in Bay Street discussing what should happen in the Caribbean when everyone else is dealing with what is happening in the world. We are now trying to deal with problems as they relate to the Caribbean when, in truth and in fact, we should be dealing with the world. We are behind and we have to put a plan in place to speed up the process instead of our Caribbean Leader sitting at tables and, it is clear that the

leaders all want power. Caribbean leaders have to single out what they want to deal with and it cannot be about leadership because as soon as leadership comes into the discussion every thing goes back to square one.

Sir, I cannot understand how we are speaking about Caribbean unity yet Trinidad says that the waters around them belong to them and they seem to think that the waters around Barbados belong to them too. If we are to talk Caribbean unity we first have to acknowledge that the sea belongs to all of us and that Caribbean people must be able to move freely.

We have to stop talking until we come to these common conclusions, get serious and decide when we are going to discuss serious issues within the Caribbean. All this talk-shop is wasting money in the Caribbean and it must stop because we are playing with the lives of people. We need to move forward and stop playing around with the lives of people. Every minute there is a Manning initiative or some other initiative yet still no one knows where we are going in the Caribbean. How can we deal with trade liberalisation and globalisation when we are fooling around with each other?

Sir, Caribbean politicians are sickening and I cannot understand it. We are operating a joke-shop trying to create cheap publicity and we have to understand that the enemy is the outer world and not the Caribbean. At the end of the day, we have to deal with the lives of barefoot people in St. George South and St. Lucy.

Sir, a few weeks ago I said in Parliament that in order for us to be serious about the Caribbean we must free up our immigration policy and I was asked to explain. Sir, I explained then that we cannot have immigration policies that only professional persons like professors, doctors and sportsmen can move freely but the ordinary hard-working people cannot move freely in the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech should deal with these issues because the marketplace in the Caribbean cannot be dictated by politicians but by the people in the Caribbean. Sir, politicians must stop behaving as if they have something to hand down to people and understand that there are the managers and that they cannot dictate the pace.

I am happy to see that the Prime Minister of Grenada has finally accepted that VAT is a good system of taxation because in order for us to have Caribbean unity there must be unity in the taxation system as well. Politicians must not believe they can take money from people and give them back in a piecemeal fashion giving the impression that they are giving something to people because politicians do not give people anything. They simply take out taxes and then give people back some of the money.

Sir, in order to compete in the world, workers must operate at their maximum because most of the islands in the Caribbean are consuming ones but politicians cannot understand this. A former Senator once said that we need to practise 'Kellmanonics' and I agree with him because it is the only taxation in the Caribbean that makes sense where the workers are allowed to work as hard as they want but in the Caribbean as a man works, he is punished because he has to pay more taxes.

Sir, it is also good to hear the Honourable Member for St. Thomas speak about house spots because for the last five years I have been telling the Minister of Housing that the important thing in Barbados has nothing to do with housing, it has to do with the availability of house spots. We have to be responsive and stop believing that we can continue to fool around, where a Minister believes that he can build a house and use that as a token to attract the attention of the masses of people of Barbados. We have to provide the impetus so that the people of Barbados can create their own niche.

11.40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that the young people of this generation are not going to react to the foolishness that is being offered to them. We must offer them something that will allow them to be excited. The problem is, we are not exciting the young people in Barbados. The same thing that we have been doing for the past 300 years, we expect to do it and expect the young people to relate to us.

Sir, as politicians, we have to understand what is happening in the world. It is clear to me that the young people understand what is happening in the world, that the world is hostile and it calls for a hostile reaction to what is happening. However, there are no opportunities for them to vent their feelings and, therefore, respond in the wrong way. We have to start changing the way we operate. We are operating like how Government used to operate in the good old-time days. We expect to continue in this Parliament as though something was handed down to us and we are supposed to continue along a particular path. Mr. Speaker, we have to understand what is happening in the world and we have to react in such a way so that we are one-step ahead of the world.

Sir, we are so backward, that we do not even understand how backward we are and these things have to change. I said before that I have no intentions of allowing this Parliament to keep me back. If I say anything in this Honourable House and it does not connect with the brains in here, I do not have any problem with that. Nobody is going to dictate a pathway for me. I know where I am going with my politics and nobody can limit me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please. I want to hear the Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We must be able to compete internationally and stop behaving as though the world owes us something that is foolishness; the world does not owe us anything, neither can we continue to believe that because we have the capacity to borrow on the world market, we are going to have an unlimited access to funds on the international market. Sir, whenever we have a problem we run to the international financial market to solve the particular problem.

Mr. Speaker, for the last nine years we have been able to access funds on the international market. Every time that we have a problem we go to the international market to solve these problems but we have to understand that a time is going to come when that market is going dry up, and we will have to return to the basics and do the things that we shied away from doing.

Sir, unfortunately for the Barbados Labour Party, in the early 1990s, all the decisions that other governments did not make, they had to make. However, at the end of the day the results are now here and people can understand the reason why the Democratic Labour Party made those bold decisions. A lot of people who should have been around to understand the policies were not around, and that is the most important thing. Sir, all of a sudden everybody now knows what happened in the early 1990s. Those who were around to understand the policies are now removed from them. Sir, I want to say that history has a way of repeating itself and when it is repeated, it is sweeter.

The Barbados Labour Party believes that if inflation is increased, the problem of unemployment would be solved. Sir, for the last nine years the Barbados Labour Party has allowed inflation to play with employment and hoped that as the economy expanded because of the inflationary trends, that the unemployment situation will ease.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party has also moved away from the systems that were put in place to count the unemployment figures. However, they are more interested in going on work sites and counting the number of persons employed.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Proceed, please.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, we have to manage these things and not hope that we would get lucky. It is clear to me that for the last nine years we have been operating on luck. The truth is, we cannot operate on luck anymore. Bold decisions will have to be made so that the country can now remove itself from the position that it is in.

Sir, we will now have to find a way to do something about tourism. The Minister of Tourism will now have to go to the Barbados Tourism Authority and tell them that instead

of going overseas and advertising Barbados as a place for sea, sand and whatever else, we should be able to instil in them that they now have to tell people about the quality of Barbados, parish by parish. They must not believe that the programmes that might be slanted in favour of small hotels are not good programmes.

Sir, the reason why we are not marketing Barbados correctly is because a lot of people believe that if Barbados is marketed correctly, the small hotels would do better than the larger ones. Sir, that is why most of the time the Barbados Tourism Authority's Board is controlled by the large hotel players and we have to put a stop to doing this. We have to understand that when we are marketing Barbados that it would be Barbados that is being marketed and not a select few. We cannot continue to give the advantage to those players who can afford to use their large budgets to market their properties, when the smaller hotels need also to be marketed.

Mr. Speaker, the eco and heritage systems of Barbados are areas where we need to expand and we need to get people who understand the importance of these things in the Caribbean to work with the Barbados Tourism Authority.
11.50 a.m.

Sir, I am appalled that after ten years, the Government of Barbados would now realise, in a Throne Speech, that agriculture is important to Barbados. After I have been in here so long fighting the Government, from day one, when we first set up the Rural Development Commission – and you can check your record for November 1994 – I asked them to increase the Budget from \$250 000 to \$2.5 million, because I never believed, in the beginning, that the Budget set up for rural development in the amount of \$250 000 was adequate.

Sir, all of a sudden, the Government now understands the importance of agriculture to the development of Barbados, and I would like to believe that the Minister of Agriculture also understands the importance of the rural aspect to agriculture. We cannot in this Parliament any longer believe, Sir, that by making suggestions to cut back the tonnage by 10 000, was not an error. It was an error. I said so before, and I will repeat it again.

Sir, it was the biggest error when we, as Honourable men and women, got on the floor of this Parliament and agreed to cut back the sugar quota by 10 000 tonnes. We also agreed to sell local sugar on the markets, instead of using it as carry forward sugar.

I, on this floor of this House, told them they were making an error and we would have found ourselves in trouble, Mr. Speaker, because that same sugar they were

selling on the local market to get a few votes, they would need it, in later years, to help with their carry forward sugar to make up their quota.

Sir, all of those things can be found in the Hansard of this Parliament. We have now witnessed that we are in a situation where, instead of using the sugar to make up our carry forward sugar so that we can supply our quota, we are in trouble of losing a portion of our quota because we used local sugar to get a few votes.

I am saying, Sir, we must understand the importance of these things to the economy of Barbados and we cannot make any decision because of votes. It has to be made because of the development of Barbados. We have to understand that before we make the same error, with those people who operate other crops, we have to understand that the biggest problem facing the fishermen and the farmers in Barbados has to do with marketing.

I have been saying on the floor of this Parliament, Sir, that instead of spending all the money building markets, we need to empower the vendors and give them the same capacity and leverage that the fishermen and farmers have, by allowing them to have duty-free vehicles to move the produce of the sea and the produce of the land across Barbados, to lessen the impact of glut.

Sir, there cannot be fishermen in the areas of Half Moon Fort, Six Mens and Speightstown having large catches, and the vendors are not empowered to move those catches across Barbados. You are stopping the development of Barbados when that happens. Neither, Sir, can you have people in Oistins and St. Philip, having the same problem, and they cannot move their catches across Barbados.

Sir, concerning all the foolishness about the fishermen not wanting to fish in Trinidad because of glut, all it calls for is a proper marketing plan. The same way you understand the importance of the fishermen, you have to understand the importance of those people who sell the produce of the fishermen and the farmers of Barbados.

We also have to understand, Mr. Speaker, that a farmer's job is in the field and a fisherman's job is in the sea. There is no way that we should limit the farmer's job or limit the fisherman's job. We have to create other layers of employment and other layers of professions, so that we can market the produce of these people, in an efficient way. What is so hard about that, using a couple of taxpayers' dollars to do it, but you know why.

Sir, if you give a man a duty-free van to do that, nobody will see it, because they will not be able to identify with it, but if you go to Eagle Hall, Cheapside,

Speightstown or St. George and put up a building, everybody can see what the Government is doing. It is not what the Government is doing from the eyeball, Sir, it is also from the Treasury and the Consolidated Fund of Barbados.

We have to understand, Sir, that at the end of the day, the cosmetics do not matter, it is the dollars that will matter. This is why it is very important that we have a new policy. It is also very important for people to understand that they have made errors in the last five years. They should stop and listen to what is being said, and act on it.

It is regrettable, Sir, that in a Parliament we have to watch people who are now more interested in cosmetics, and this Parliament has been deprived of the people who can create the action and deliver the goods to the masses of people of Barbados. What can we do?

What we have to understand, Sir, is that we cannot any longer walk around this world and tell people that we are number one in Tourism. We are inviting more than one million people to our shores, according to the Minister of Tourism, and we have one hospital to serve our people and to serve the tourists coming to Barbados. We expect people to leave their shores and come to Barbados to spend time in Barbados, when there is no hope for medical care, if anything major occurs. We cannot be serious. If we want to be a serious tourism country, we have to put the infrastructure in place.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that we also have to understand that we need to have a second hospital. If you want a location for a second hospital, I have land in St. Lucy that you could use, never mind it is Crown land.

I want the Minister of Health and the Minister of Tourism to understand that when the St. Lucy District Hospital is completed, it is not the option for SARS cases, because St. Lucy is no dumping ground. St. Lucy must remain the independent parish of Barbados, as it is, and will continue to remain that way.

Sir, we understand that there is a need for a second hospital in Barbados and we welcome the second hospital in Barbados. We understand the importance of the second hospital, not only for the people of Barbados but for the tourism industry of Barbados.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please, order please.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, all those who have ideas and want to float them and test them, I want to say, take warning.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, do not think I can be played with, as if playing with a joker. St. Lucy is no dumping ground, and I want all the planners to understand that.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: There are three cut off points, the Judge Gap, now Kellman's Road, Duncan O'Neal Highway by Allendale and Datetree Hill.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: If we have to use it we will use it, because it is obvious that they have a number of people who are prepared to do it.

Stop playing with St. Lucy, if you cannot give us the roads. We have applied for 120 roads and have not even received 10 per cent of them.

Sir, we never applied for the St. Lucy District Hospital to be used for anything else and anybody who wants to deal with anything related to St. Lucy, must consult the people of St. Lucy. Nobody can push anything on the people of St. Lucy, because when we asked for the two hotels, you did not notice us. When we asked for the 120 roads, you did not notice us. When we asked for the airport, you did not notice us. When we asked for the house lots, you did not notice us.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying, Sir, that the problem with some people is that they just cannot understand development at a higher level. Their minds are always at the primary stage and they do not understand the tertiary development for a small country like Barbados. Small-minded people will always think small.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Obviously, Sir.

I am saying, Sir, that I have served warning for all of those who have wonderful plans for the people of St. Lucy, without consulting the people of St. Lucy. We are aware of the plans. I have put them in the public. If you want to test us, test us. I am telling you that their backbones are stronger than mine, and you know that mine is not weak.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes. They are people but the development must come first, not them.

I am also saying, Mr. Speaker, that the vendors of Barbados must be given their true role in this country. Sir, for too long, we have treated vendors as if they were drop-outs from society. No, they are not. They are the people of Barbados who market the produce of Barbados. In order to develop Barbados, we must give the vendors a higher role and not just by putting them in markets. We cannot continue to limit vendors by putting them in markets. They must be allowed to float through Barbados and generate their true capacity and ability, and exploit their goods.
12.00 noon

The vendors must be given the same duty-free concessions that the fish vendors, the fishermen and the farmers get. There is a connection between the consumer, the farmers, fishermen and the vendors and they too must be given that leverage.

If we really want to develop Barbados, we have to develop Barbados from the primary stage. However, it is easier to operate in Barbados at the tertiary stage and get what you want, especially if you are coming from outside. If you want to build a new hotel, you can come to Barbados and get all the concessions you want, but if you are living in Barbados, 'the crapaud smoke your pipe' if you ever have a minor problem.

The first thing you have to do is to build a home base and protect it, but in Barbados we do protect the outside base and murder the home base. That is foolishness. Mr. Speaker, we must change the way we operate. We must understand that we have to develop Barbados for Barbadians first and then for everybody else, but in Barbados it is not like that. So we need to change that outlook and change it soon.

I thank you.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise on this occasion to give my fullest support to this Resolution which is before this Honourable Chamber. Therefore, permit me to use this opportunity to congratulate the Right Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Members on This Side for the very comprehensive, revolutionary and visionary programmes for the next five years of this parliamentary session which were recently outlined in the Throne Speech by His Excellency Sir Clifford Husbands.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is resolutely committed to the eradication of poverty from our social landscape and is equally committed to providing the necessary opportunities to all Barbadians who might still be marginalised within our society. We are certainly aware that the existence and acceptance of poverty amounts to a denial of an individual human rights and undermine and weaken the family and by extension this entire society.

To this end, we will ensure that Barbadians, especially those of our most vulnerable groups, are empowered in such a way that they will be inspired to take on the challenges of self-development rather than a total dependence on the social services. To achieve this objective, we will ensure that social assistance is translated into economic sustainability.

Sir, when we talk about poverty, I certainly know what it is to be poor. I know what it is to go in Queen's Park and sit down and wait for food. I know what it is to go into the same Queen's Park and sit down and wait for \$1.50 per week to carry home to my mother to help support four or five children. I know what it is to walk barefoot and to walk about the community with patches in my pants.

Sir, an elderly person in my community once said to me: "Hammie La, I do not fear death, I fear poverty." Every one of us in this Honourable Chamber, except possibly a chosen few, would have had an experience with poverty conditions in this country. I am sure that most of us who would have grown up in 1950s and the 1960s will recall the misadventures in Barbados of poverty. There is no Honourable Member of the Opposition, except for two, who cannot recall his existence when he was in his early infancy of living in poverty. The two, if you permit me to call them, would be the Honourable Member for St. John and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please! please!

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: My apologies, Sir. Sir, our social transformation and poverty eradication plan will engage a comprehensive and integral approach that includes all sectors of our society; the public, the private sector, the non-governmental organisations, the community-based organisations and the wider civil society. Our assault on poverty and other forms of social and economic marginalisation will improve infrastructure deficiencies in our communities.

In addition, we will ensure environmental enhancement and encourage enterprise development and innovation. We will also reshape and rebuild families in our communities with our community assault programmes which are headed in the Ministry by a young and talented officer by the name of Mr. John Hollingsworth.

When one examines the communities in Barbados, one always talks about physical infrastructure. We always like to see buildings. We like to build, what I always refer to as concrete jungle, but the most important factor and the most crucial element is that of the social infrastructure.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas alluded to this in her delivery earlier which I thought was a very

wonderful social discourse in this Honourable Chamber because it impacted on the heart of the problems emanating from families in Barbados and sometimes at the very basis of the community.

Sir, I want to use this opportunity also to tell the people of this wonderful country of ours, that together we will continue on our journey to eradicate poverty. When I say eradicate poverty, sometimes some people scoff at the idea, some people laugh at the idea and some people take a religious stance on the idea by referring to the fact that Jesus said in the Bible, the poor will always be with us, but he also said in the next chapter that we must help the poor. That help, if we underline it, means that we must develop the relevant systems and programmes to help those persons in our midst who cannot help themselves.

Therefore, we in the Ministry of Social Transformation are on a course within our lifetime to eradicate poverty which is very much possible. It is not only realistic but achievable. Poverty alleviation remains our number one priority within the social transformation agenda of this Government. Our goal and our real aim, although it might sound lofty and some people might say farfetched, is to lift every single Barbadian who is living below the accepted standard of the poverty line above that poverty line. The economist among us here knows that the international institutions have set that poverty line at a benchmark of \$5 500 per annum. Our mission is to lift those persons that are below that benchmark above it.

In some of the developed countries and some of the Channel Islands, poverty does not exist at all. We have this concept in Barbados that there is an element of poverty in every single country across the world.
12.10 p.m.

Sir, during the past eight years, we have addressed these problems at the community level, through an aggressive Rural Development Programme and the Urban Development Commission. In this new term, we will give greater emphasis to the remaining causes of poverty, while recognising that the root cause of poverty is powerlessness, caused by an inadequate lack of skills and an inadequate access to financial and other basic resources.

Sir, our fight against poverty would be intensified through the creation of enterprise and the empowerment of our citizens to live independent and decent lives. Our plan of action is not designed merely to alleviate the symptoms of poverty but to bring resources and new capabilities within the power and control of our poor persons, also to enable them to achieve their goals, dreams and aspirations in tangible ways.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will pursue a policy for the eradication of poverty that leaves absolutely no one out and we will continue until every individual and household could boast of enjoying a decent standard of living. Indeed, we will not rest nor retire, until every old or disabled person in this country is housed and cared for, until every youth is cared for and educated, until communities are included in building pathways out of poverty, as outlined in the Copenhagen Accord of 1995 and the Port-of-Spain Accord in Trinidad and Tobago, in 1996.

Sir, to these commitments, this Government has launched a three-pronged attack on poverty eradication. After the Pathways of Poverty Conference in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, in 1996, this Government has instituted first of all, the Social Investment Fund. Additionally, the Poverty Eradication Fund was instituted, all in 1996.

In 1997, the Urban Development Commission was also implementing a three-pronged attack and, for the first time in the history of this small country, a Government would have taken this important social revolutionary approach to enhance the lives of the poor, the disenfranchised and demarginalised within our country.

Mr. Speaker, there are persons in this country who sometimes like to refer to our Ministry as one of handouts and I know these persons know better. Let me say that any caring Government of the poor and of those persons who cannot help themselves, must provide the necessary safety nets for our disabled, our poor, our single mothers of large households and others who cannot help themselves. We must provide the necessary safety nets for those individuals.

Sir, our programme is designed to give resources if we are going to understand the massive problems with which we are dealing and the number of counter programmes and policies that we would be developing in the Ministry of Social Transformation, to deal with the problem of poverty in Barbados.

Sir, our programme is designed to give resources to the systemic poor, those persons born into poverty; the structural poor who are affected by brief periods of economic decline; the working poor and pensioners and the transient poor, who are also affected by changes in the economy of a country. For example, farmers, construction workers, *et cetera*, all would benefit from our Poverty Eradication and Empowerment Programme.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that you are a religious person and, like most of us, would have seen and recited the 10 Commandments on more than one occasion. I remember the star of a movie, Charleston Heston, once saying: "So it is written, so it will be done." Sir, these measures of which I have spoken will be done because it is recorded in a document, which is a document of this House.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to some of the main aspects of our empowerment programme, which are critical. In this term, we will institute an innovative Community Enterprise Empowerment and Divestment Programme (CEED) where we are seeking to basically replicate the Deacons Development Programme model across other communities in Barbados.

Sir, there is another aspect of the programme which I call the divestment programme. What we are seeking to do is that some of the Government facilities within the communities, we want to transfer the management of those community facilities to those ordinary community based organisations (CBOs). The reason we are moving in that direction is that there are still too many community development aids, community development officers and watchmen in particular, who love to hang on to the keys to these facilities and when the facilities are needed to be used, these persons cannot be found and, therefore, have to remain closed. A community should not function like that, it should be opened on a 24-hour basis and not closed on evenings.

Sir, some would say that is an indictment on Hamilton Lashley because the Community Development Department is under his Ministry, which is true, but I am not only speaking of the community facilities that are under my Ministry but also of the many pavilions in Barbados.
12.20 p.m.

If we are going to talk about revolutionary social approaches we have to rethink our strategy and make community facilities far more accessible to those persons who really need them. We need a new system of Government that will make sure that at all times those community-based organisations are given the mandate and challenges to cover their own geographical territories.

Sir, we come to Parliament and behave as if we are the sole judges, executioners and practitioners of public finance. When I hear about transparency and accountability, it is necessary and critical but sometimes we put stumbling blocks in our own way for achieving success because many persons employed in the civil establishment of this country find ways of not making things happen rather than making things happen and stop progressive programmes from happening. Sir, we have to be careful about the kinds of systems we set up, that we do not put stumbling blocks in the way of progress and we have to be cognisant of how people in the community feel and how they think.

Sir, if these initiatives are to succeed, we must provide the necessary training, technical assistance and refinancing instruments which will be used to ensure that those innovative ventures ultimately succeed. Sir, we are not only funding businesses but also business ideas. There was a time in this country when there were thriving black

businesses and all of us in this Honourable Chamber have a right to make sure that the small black business class in this country re-emerges and be given all the sustainable benefits to guide them through this rough economic period that is currently prevailing the world.

Against that background we will make sure that 50 per cent of all the resources allocated to the Urban Development Commission is made available for enterprise development at the attractive rate of 4 per cent interest. Additionally, we will make those resources available to those well organised and structured community-based organisations and because we are talking about transparency and accountability we will be bringing to this Honourable Chamber shortly and for the first time in the history in Barbados the necessary NGO legislation to support this initiative. There is a belief that if you are giving community groups in Barbados funding from Government that there is no accountability even though we are empowering those community groups. Additionally, we are implementing programmes to help the boys on the 'block' but sometimes we hear all sorts of derogatory remarks from persons in this country who should know better but we do not see any of those persons doing anything for the community.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, I like to talk to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West because he knows about the ghetto, and he cannot represent a Party in this Honourable Chamber, about the cause of the poor and marginalised. Therefore, some of the barriers, civil bureaucracy and red tape that we put in place to hinder the boys on the 'block' and the disabled must be removed.

I would like to see under the Ministry of Social Transformation that the mandate of the National Disability Unit and the National Assistance Board mandates be changed. If we are dealing with this new global phenomenon of ageing, we should set up a department on ageing.

The focus of our Poverty Fund, our Community Development Department and the Bureau of Gender Affairs must change. There must be a merger of those three departments and a board should be set up to govern these most important institutions since this country is now at the cutting edge of the new information technology era.

Sir, in Barbados we honour tradition too much and it sometimes strangles us because, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael East often says, we like to hold on to the coat tail of the colonial master in Great Britain.

This Government in the Throne Speech said it will be moving towards a republic state. Sir, this Government was the first one to introduce women into the non-traditional sectors of work as contractors and this reminds me of a film on television called *Star Trek* whose theme was to boldly go where no man has ever gone before. The Americans and Australians have taught women carpentry, masonry and electrical skills and these women are building houses in these countries. Why are we in Barbados so afraid of changes? Why are we not talking about employing our women and letting them get involved in the non-traditional sectors of work and having them gainfully employed instead of staying home and, in some cases, being brutalised by men who do not care about them and being subservient to these men all of their lives?
12.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that our representation in this Honourable Chamber is not for us to come in here, sit down, put our feet up and behave like 'big shots'. We have been sent to set a new pathway for our children and our children's children. Everyone of us will be judged harshly and sternly if we cannot act on the people's behalf. We come into this Honourable Chamber and set up obstacles that hinder progress, particularly social development of this country.

Sir, all of us in this Honourable Chamber are part of this system of Government. All of us are Barbadians. I do not believe that we have any outsiders in this Parliament. I know that all of us are Barbadians and I hope by birth. Sir, all of us have an inherited the right to the same principles of this country.

Sir, it hurts me to know that we are all Barbadians and we are so political that when an Honourable Member of this Honourable House loses his seat, we do not greet that person anymore. We treat politics in such a terrible way that all those persons who came through this Honourable Chamber would have made a significant contribution through commitment and sacrifice but because of the democratic and electoral process, have lost their seat and they are no longer recognised by the current politicians.

Sir, there is a small brass plate at the entrance to this Chamber where the names of politicians are displayed and we do not notice the names on it. We treat our politicians badly. We have two surviving leaders of this country and we do not treat them with the respect that is due. We still look at one of them being a member of the Barbados Labour Party, one being a member of the Democratic Labour Party and all kind of foolishness.

Sir, all of us have to stop the polarisation. A Ministry like Social Transformation cannot put out its mandate on its own. It needs the involvement of every sector of this country. It needs the involvement of civil society and more

so the goodwill of the Opposition. I hate that word Opposition. I cannot understand how Honourable Members can come in here to do the people's business and we are talking about Opposition and the Government. It is all Government as far as Hamilton Lashley is concerned.

Sir, I say these things because it is one of the most progressive pieces of social legislation and engineering that was ever developed in this country: that is the creation of a ministry to deal with the poor, disenfranchised and marginalised. If this fails, every Barbadian would have failed.

Mr. Speaker, my friend, Denis, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy speaks of it as a policy but it varies in definition. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West describes social transformation in the Democratic Labour Party's manifesto as what his personal definition is. I just want to see all of us come together and help the process of helping the poor by combining all our various skills.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, we will expand our enterprise loans programme by making more funds available at good rates. I am not talking about philosophy, theory or policy.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have two more minutes.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, two minutes is not enough.

Sir, we will fast-track the programme where the transfer of over 300 titles have been transferred to people residing in this country. Since I do not have the time to elaborate on it, I want to conclude by saying that because of the challenges that are ahead of us, we are restructuring the entire Ministry of Social Transformation and the Urban Development Commission. We will shortly be implementing a hotline at the Urban Development Commission. In addition, we will be putting a Customer Satisfaction Form in place so that when houses are completed by the Urban Development Commission (UDC), the person has to sign this form to say that the house has been built to his satisfaction.

Mr. Speaker, we will be having a Rapid Repair Unit to

cater to persons who are in need of funds to build water toilets and do general repairs up to a maximum of \$18 500. We will also be introducing a 50/50 work programme where, for example, Mr. Trevor Prescod, I am not referring to the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, wants to build his house he can bring the material and we will provide the labour. Sir, under this arrangement we would see more houses being built.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West made a very good point. He said that one of the things that the Ministry should be doing is embarking on this kind of programme. I am saying that the Ministry is open to suggestions.

Sir, there are several things that I can talk about but I do not have sufficient time to do so. I am going to urge all of us to redirect our energies, thinking, policies and philosophies to the single most challenge in this country and that is the eradication of poverty. I want to urge all churches, youth organisations, NGO's and every person to join us in this mission as we forge ahead; as we steer this ship called the 'S.S. Transformation' across the stormy waters. Sir, let it be known that captain 'Hammie La' will steer this ship safely. I also want all of us to recommit ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, if I had the time I would ask each and every person in this Honourable House to adopt my motto and repeat after me 'Let no obstacle be greater than the cause.'

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that further consideration of this matter be deferred. Mr. Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government Business for the day.

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

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I do ask that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Tuesday, July 22, 2003 at 10.00 o'clock in the morning.

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

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ESTWICK, Dr. D. C. (St. Philip West)
FORDE, Hon. Miss C. Y. (St. Thomas)
KELLMAN, Mr. D. St. E. (St. Lucy)
LASHLEY, Hon. H. F. (St. Michael South East)
WOOD, Hon. A. P. (St. Philip South)