

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

Thursday, December 08, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

The sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for accommodating me again on this annual occasion. Of course, I continue to be very appreciative to the people of St. Michael West, who have given me the opportunity to represent their interest, both in and out of this August Chamber. I am ever thankful to God who has revealed this aspect of His purpose in my life for me to be involved in both Parliamentary process and in the business of Government in this country, at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a contribution to the debate, which I hope would be worthwhile. My contribution surrounds the statement presented two day ago by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and Minister of Finance, in relation to perhaps one of the periods of greatest challenge in the history of modern humanity for sure. Sir, some would suggest that this period in which we now live, is, in fact, the most challenging of times. Sir, part of the irony of that is that governments are being called upon to be sure-footed and resolute in these times of great uncertainty. Sir, that uncertainty is occasioned by several significant features operating both in domestic circumstances and international context.

Sir, in terms of geopolitics, we live a very unipolar system; these days a unipolar system, its only real counter, some would suggest, is a threat of terrorist activity. Some may even want to suggest that this is the only counter to the existing system that is being respected these days.

Mr. Speaker, we live at a time when the system of global production is one whose greed is unchecked by any reference to human compassion. I think that in small economies such as ours, this is the experience which we live and the harsh reality which we must face. We must face the fact that these days greed of the international community is such that in the plans and designs of super states, human compassion does not enter into such calculations these days.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a time when a capitalist culture is one in which investment must too often mean exploitation. Therefore, we find that gains which we have made in terms of development of sovereign identity and sovereign practice over the years, find themselves in danger of being reversed because of this kind of posture, where capitalist investments seem to feel too often that it must reflect itself in exercises in new means of exploitation of people whom they would want to return to a status of

subjection.

Mr. Speaker, there are also the inevitable reversals of nature, which are more and more becoming the output of global industrialised mischief, where large states, and indifferently so, without consideration for the fragile environments in which smaller and developing states operate, apply their international trade and pursue their international interest, to the detriment of states such as ours and in parts of the world such as ours.

Mr. Speaker, part of the challenge of this time is also to be found in the imperatives of the integrated relations in which we feel that we must participate at this time, both with reference to our immediate Caribbean context, the farther hemispheric context and, of course,

in terms of the intermix of global interest around the world.

Sir, the notions integrated relations for us are today presenting a situation where consideration of common survival must find itself juxtaposed with notions of competitive disadvantage. Therefore, out of this, we are now seeing it, that is, fear, some real and some imagined, in the Barbadian society and across the Caribbean, arising out of the need to properly integrate ourselves in the interest of common survival because of the existing tendencies towards competitive disadvantage.

Mr. Speaker, if I understood the Honourable Minister of Finance when he made his presentation, as part of the principal thrust, he highlighted that part of that objective would be to give greater viability and stability to our external trade position. We all know, of course, that this has much to do with our capacity to gain international market share in both product and service niche context. It also has to do with developing a further capacity to earn by dint of export, as has been traditionally the custom in our particular context.

Sir, whether we talk of a household, a business enterprise, or of a state entity, we both know that there needs to be a sufficiently favourable relationship between inflows and outflows, to ensure viability of that particular entity, whatever its characteristics may be.

H:No.049(51)940 a.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Inflow, therefore, should better facilitate outflows. It is a question of imports by means of export earning. In short, our national import capacity must be derived through export performance. I understand these matters as a lay person that this was part of the principal thrust of the presentation from the Minister of Finance. He made it clear that effort must be to stimulate the economy towards greater diversification of exports. We have come out a context in the past where we have relied significantly on mono crop production in countries such as ours. We have gone past that but still we have not gone sufficiently far along the path to such diversification as would cause us to be comfortable as we face the challenges of a global and competitive environment.

The Prime Minister secondly suggested that we must further facilitate domestic production for the purpose of local consumption to offset the over-reliance existing at this time on import trade of commodities. Obviously, this is the reality that we must deal with and the necessary steps we must take in order to improve our own economic situation and to be more reliant on ourselves.

The context defined in which we are pursuing these types of initiatives is one in which trade liberalisation and financial liberalisation are already impacting on small open economies such as ours. Mr. Speaker, I believe this would be further compounded as service liberalisation become more and more so a reality in which we would have to deal especially in a context where Barbados is moving towards developing a strong service-oriented economy here in our domestic context.

Sir, this must be done because we are left without a choice. These are essential and noble goals and the energies of all Barbadians must be exercised towards achievement of these goals. It must be understood that we pursue these objectives in a context where there continue to be the loss of concessional borrowing privileges. In short, we have become victims of our own success and some would suggest in the international world that we must pay the penalty for being successful, managing ourselves well and developing ourselves along prudent lines.

We must pursue these initiatives in the context of reciprocal rather than preferential trade relationship. It is a question of competitive advantage rather than the traditional comparative advantage context in which we previously operated. We must pursue these initiatives in the face of international competition even though we are forced to do so at this time with inferior technology when compared to developed states and operating out of a limited resource base in the absence of an abundance of mineral and other natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, such competition has continued to be created and facilitated by nation states and supra national organisations which continue to disregard our vulnerabilities to the violence of nature from time to time and because of environmental fragility in developing states such as Barbados where the currency is fairly fickle and the presence of indigenous capital does not exist in very potent fashion.

It is in these contexts that supra national organisations and states continue to disregard our vulnerabilities and deny us the same amelioration which they afford themselves at home, things like subsidies which we are denied but which are implemented in their own market context for the shoring up of certain sectors. They continue to dispute the doctrine of special circumstances and deferential treatment as a basis upon which these relationships should be premised such as the world in which we now live and the environment in which we must pursue these initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, Government must be sure-footed and must be resolute in these circumstances. I think it is one of the characteristics and hallmarks of the Barbados Labour Party's administration over the past years that it has been resolute to the extent that it has been sure-footed in uncertain times.

The Honourable Minister of Finance was clear in his presentation as to reveal to all, in no uncertain terms that the position taken by Government in pursuit of these goals and in spite of the context in which we must operate, that it would not be one in which we move towards the banning of exports which is not so realistic in these days anyhow and that it would not be one in which we baulk in the face of the

inevitable process of liberalisation. Sir, it would not be one in which we depress demand by reducing disposable income available to people for stimulation of the economy. In fact, rather than any move to reduce disposable income, there is a continuing policy initiative which would further increase disposable incomes in this presentation two days ago.

One would want to take careful and exciting note of the fact that there is to be further tax relief in terms of personal income with the movement in the threshold for payment in income tax from \$17 000 to \$20 000 and also change and movement in the marginal rate down from 40 per cent to 37 per cent.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter indicated that this is going to mean that a further 7 000 persons as of next year would come off the tax roll in Barbados. If you are one of those persons, I think this is something about which to be excited. Beyond that, between now and 2007 when this particular initiative in terms of the reduction of taxes on personal income would have been fully realised, a total of 26 000 persons would have been brought to a position where they are not required to pay taxes on personal income.

Mr. Speaker, many of these people reside in St. Michael Central, in Bush Hall, Waterford, Station Hill and Deane's Village and many of them reside in Richmond, Passage Road, Hindsbury Road, Bank Hall, Garden Land, Parris Gap, Goodland in St. Michael West. I speak on their behalf as well to express appreciation for this kind of consideration and multiple numbers of this 26 000 between now and 2007 would be grateful for this kind of relief because it puts more money into their hands so that they can spend and utilise it as necessary and fruitful in terms of their own experience.

Mr. Speaker, I support the creation of Export Barbados Inc. as part of the institutional strengthening within that sector. Obviously, there is a recognition that there is institutional deficiency which needs to be addressed and this is being set up to formulate and promote policy and to develop an incentive framework within which those who exist principally for the purpose of export,

H49/9:

50 a.m.

Sequence 52

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

...and whether products and services will be able to avail themselves of such incentives as would make life easier for them and the business of production.

Sir, incentives go to foreign investors who set up shops here in Barbados. It is fair, prudent and good that incentives are further developed for those who operate at home to help Barbados to earn foreign exchange by way of export promotion and involvement.

Mr. Speaker, incentives are being provided for Barbadians living abroad who want to utilise Barbadian products and might want to establish entities and market these products overseas. Sir, some of us would have had heard Barbadians who live in the United Kingdom and North America lament the fact that they

cannot find any Barbadian products in those countries, for example, hot sauce and other products that they might like to use from time to time. We observe that the Asian cultures effectively use this means of marketing their products in these metropolitan centres to their nationals who are living away from home.

Sir, I believe that the Export Promotion Inc. will have a significant responsibility in terms of market research.

I also believe that much of the time the export thrust is negated, perhaps, it is not as potent as it could be because of the lack of capability on the part of entities involved in export to do the proper market search. Entities will need to know the variables such as the cultural characteristics operating in the intended export market. What are the economics, politics and demographics existing in that market? This is valuable information which could only be properly acquired through systematic and professional research.

Mr. Speaker, there are issues as price promotion and distribution considerations and we need to have knowledge of the dynamics of entry conditions. What are the conditions for entry into the market? What is the competition policy framework in which you will have to operate and what is the existing growth rate trends in the intending market?

Sir, large concerns have the capacity to do this kind of research. Some of them devote entire departments to this type of activity. Some of them deploy their operatives overseas, who are engaged solely in this type of work. Mr. Speaker, some of them have the capacity to contract on-site firms overseas to do this type of research on their behalf and that gives them a significant competitive advantage. Sir, if our intended export oriented entities are to have the same kind of advantage or at least to have a chance in that export context, then they must be given the capacity to avail themselves to the benefit of this kind of research.

I also salute the initiatives which address small and micro business support here in Barbados. The Government has given a commitment that every year it will introduce at least one new measure in support of small and micro business in Barbados and that is a significant commitment. There are some whose voices are loudly heard in expressing consideration and interest for the welfare of the small man and the small business enterprise.

Sir, the Small Business Association is benefitting from a subvention from Government both with reference to its Secretariat and the implementation of special projects from time to time. In this presentation Government is providing \$250,000 in technical assistance to facilitate product design and training for members of that association. A similar thing is already being done on a larger scale through the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, there is already in existence a small business venture initiative which has invested in a number of small companies in Barbados. As I understand the Minister of Finance, an additional \$1 million will go to this Venture Capital Fund as well in further support of small business.

Sir, about this time last year, Government's commitment was that it would further capitalise fund access from a level \$5.8 million by an additional \$1.6 million each year for the next 4 years. That

process is ongoing.

Sir, Government has also given a commitment that it would capitalise the Enterprise Growth Fund to a level of \$10 million, up from the existing \$4.7 million over the next 4 years as well. We know that the Enterprise Growth Fund is a venture support initiative for export oriented small business operations. It is very much in keeping with the general thrust of the presentation yesterday to address the matter of the earnings of foreign exchange.

Sir, Government has committed itself to moving the loan ceiling at Fund Access from \$50,000 to \$100,000 with a repayment period over 10 years. Those were initiatives taken in the interest of developing the small business sector in Barbados.

Perhaps, it is this sector more than others that is likely to benefit in the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Many people see the right of establishment as a threat to existing Barbadian businesses. Sir, perhaps, there is opportunity under that same right of establishment for small businesses in Barbados to have opportunities overseas. Maybe, this is a sector that we will see taken care of in the future.

Certainly, the capacity to generate meaningful employment in record numbers and the record of Government on this issue is good. We anticipate that if this sector can be made to thrive it will even get better. It is the experience of the United States of America at this time that this sector is the one that is picking up the slack, which was occasioned by the outsourcing of labour to sources where cheap labour exists for American companies migrating to the overseas market. The small enterprise sector in the United States of America is picking up much of the slack of the excess labour capacity occasioned by the movement of firms away from the United States of America.

Sir, akin to this initiative is the development of the creative economy. This was somewhat scoffed at by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. The reality is that we now live in a knowledge market. If we exist in a knowledge, and that would become more and more the reality in which Barbados operates and in which the Barbados economy has to perform, then you cannot simply scoff at the notion of developing the creative economy.

Sir, it speaks to the maturing of our cultural industries for the export potential and benefit that we can derive from that for earning of foreign exchange. This is already happening on a limited scale but the potential is there because we have the talents, skills and the cultural craft to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is critical when one makes reference to our own confidence both in terms of our sovereign identity and expression, that we create a cultural heritage here which expresses the best of ourselves, identifies us clearly to the world, of which we are proud, and which is one that would earn for us as we compete in this world for a market share.

Mr. Speaker, certainly, it is a positive counter to one of the main negatives of globalisation if we could create one of the cultural environments. Globalisation further facilitates the spread of capitalist materialistic culture. We see the promotion of icons who dwarf our own icons because of marketing skills and potential. We also see foreign models being established for our children because of cultural penetration. Sir, because of this negative in the phenomenon of globalisation, we find that the

contributions and achievements of our own icon and heroes tend to be devalued. Indeed, the spread of this foreign culture in the new globalisation context seems to threaten our very system of values.

Mr. Speaker, the development of a creative economy in which culture is a principal component serves us not only in terms of generating employment, helping people to earn revenue and earning foreign exchange in competitive markets, but also defending ourselves and countering the influence of a culture which deprives us of much of what is good and ought to be maintained.

49/10:00 a.m.

Sequence 53

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 54, 10:
00 a.m.

Continuation of Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

The small hotel sector initiatives must also be supported. We say that tourism is doing well and I heard that said in many places. I have not heard a lot of voices express plaudits for the Minister of Tourism and perhaps it is in place that we do. If tourism is doing well, we should not be left to believe that it is in spite of the Minister and not so much because of the Minister, and so, if tourism is doing well, he ought to be applauded.

Sir, when it is not doing well, I am sure he would be suitably criticised but, I want to give him my plaudits. I support the creation of the funding assistance to help with the capacity for refurbishment. This is especially important in a small hotel sector, especially if it is to expand markets in Europe.

Sir, we are talking now of new traffic coming out of Manchester, directly into Barbados and I think that Europeans tend to gravitate more so towards this type of accommodation. I am not an expert on these matters. We would want therefore to ensure that this type of accommodation is available in greater numbers, and there was some lament in the presentation that is not the case.

We need to correct the lopsided infrastructural development, in terms of our hotel capacity, especially in light of the move towards CSME, because movement would mean that people need to be accommodated, both regionally and people who are coming from far afield.

I support also the move to facilitate the growth of community accommodation through the \$5 million loan which is going to be set up. This is an imperative for pending World Cup but it is also a tradition in most Caribbean islands, perhaps not so much in Barbados, that people make sure that their homes can accommodate visitors from which they earn some income.

This is one means of passing on benefits, I believe, Mr. Speaker, to the wider Barbadian populace so that tourism is seen to benefit all of us so that we may feel better motivated to play our part. Perhaps, a

similar initiative could be conceived as part of a response to the Housing demand existing in Barbados at this time.

A word of public sector reform, if I may, before I am forced to take my seat, that is necessary but I go further. I think what we need really is a revolution in the public service culture in Barbados more than reform. It is critical to increase competitiveness. It is crucial to attracting on going investment. It is important for the survival of entities, such as our water services, transport services and our postal services. I think we need to go beyond reform and have a total change in the culture with respect to appointments, promotions, performance and rewards, hours of work, such as in health services.

It is important that the Government changes the whole culture in which Government does business. The introduction of initiatives to further the process of e-government is absolutely important. The business of information and communications technology, through on the table at CARICOM is not sufficiently embraced by people at the policy level in CARICOM. I have been to a number of these Minister's meetings and a lot of them have been marked by the absence of Ministers responsible for information, communication and technology.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member has one minute to conclude.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sir, that needs to be brought further on the table, both for the purpose of regulation and business facilitation. Of course, it has down the road, implications for employment and that would have to be carefully studied. There are also some security considerations that will have to be taken on board.

The intention and the goal must be to bring Government closer to its customers, both in the business sector and in the private domestic sector. It will help with the business of increased revenue capacity and collection, as well as the problem of loss of productive time. We have seen one or two initiatives which got specific reference from the Minister of Finance in his presentation on this matter.

We are moving technologically at the Immigration Department. In fact, the business of a machinery readable passport is already a reality. The last I heard is that 15 000 of them have been distributed and are in use. Also, the business of searches with respect to titles of land is important. It consumes a lot of time, and delays of plans for a lot of people and I support that technology which would aid in this process.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the presentation of the Minister of Finance two days ago.

I thank you for your indulgence.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, two days ago, the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter presented his economic and financial statement for 2004. This is the tenth year of this Government being in office and one would expect that at this stage, we should be able to reflect on the strategies assumed at the beginning of the

term and review exactly where we have come, since this Government took office in 1994. Then, review with the intention of seeing where best we should go from here.

Mr. Speaker, I think we agreed on both sides of this House that the greatest resource that we have in this country is our people. We have no mineral wealth and, therefore, it is only fitting that an exercise such as this, coming at this time, as I said, after a decade that a Government has been in office, we should be able to look at exactly how it impacts on our greatest resource.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we live in a period where many Barbadians are not satisfied with their access to housing. Many Barbadians are dealing with the increase in the cost of living. Many Barbadians are dealing with declining standards in our education institutions and in our delivery of health services as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot simply look at the broad blandishments that perhaps we would have heard and, the little incentives here and there to this sector or that sector. We have to look at how it impacts on people. In that respect, it is necessary for me to do something on behalf of my Party at the outset.

I received some phone calls yesterday from persons who attended a function at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill and they told me of statements that were made by a very senior Member of this Government, no lesser person than the Governor of the Central Bank, suggesting that university fees may soon have to be paid by Barbadian students.

I trust that she was on a frolic of her own. She is probably just expressing a view. I do not think it was Government policy, however, I would just wish to state on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party that we are not supportive of any such initiative, regardless of mind what form or fashion it may take. This is something that we must say up front, in terms of where our position is and in that respect.

Mr. Speaker, let me laud the presentation yesterday by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who clearly understood that at this point, we should be looking at how our economic policies impact on the people. He understood that by his presentation and no doubt, captured the imagination of the nation by dealing with issues that people were concerned about, such as, water, bus fares, housing and education.

The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter said that the main thrust of his presentation, was dealing with this issue of the rate at which imports are dominating exports, the trade imbalance that we have, which he identified as his principal focus. We understand the need for that because we are a small open economy. We are heavily import dependent and, obviously, we cannot sustain a situation where there is a run on our foreign reserves.

House 049, sequence 54, 10:
1014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, it was suggested that this was happening as a result of the liberalisation of our trading arrangements from participation in these various trade theatres that we are part of.

Mr. Speaker, this is not new. We have been hearing this in here, financial statements after financial statements, for at least the past six years, so are we to understand that this is an admission of guilt or rather an admission of failure on the part of the Government of Barbados? After ten years in office, Mr. Speaker, and on the eve of entering into the regional single market, surely we should be further ahead in terms of having positioned our foreign exchange earning sectors and should not now be in here trying to get these areas of activities in order. It does not make sense, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the indifferent performance of manufacturing which the Honourable Minister of Finance spoke to is something that should be causing us tremendous concern. There was a time, Mr. Speaker, when manufacturing was one of the major sources for employment in this country. We have been losing jobs at a tremendous rate in this sector. Indeed, the Report of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation which was made a document of this House only two days ago, shows that there has been a decline in the numbers employed in that sector. There are just over 9 000 people who are now employed in the manufacturing sector, but as recently as 1994, 13 000 people were employed in that sector. We hear often about those dark days. We hear about the austerity programme, but where are we now in this sector?

Mr. Speaker, we are now hearing of efforts on the part of the Government to try to breathe some life back into that sector. This is a promise which was made by the Honourable Member for St. Peter when he came into office in 1994. We remember the huge splash in the Press. However, ten years later, now that the death rattle is in the throat of manufacturing and now that we are approaching near vanishing points with all manufacturing operations in Barbados, we are now hearing about another attempt to breathe life into manufacturing and about some initiative called the basic industries of Barbados to rebuild capacity in the areas that were traditionally the core of Barbadian manufacturing. Mr. Speaker, having presided over their demise, it is really sad that we really now have to rebuild capacity.

Mr. Speaker, having said what I said at the beginning that our greatest resource is our people, what about the skills that have already been lost, some that may have migrated and some that have gone into other areas of activity? How are we going to rebuild skills having lost so much capacity for such an extended period of time? Mr. Speaker, it does not end there. Can you imagine we are hearing in 2004 that the decision to subsume the Export Promotion Corporation into the operations of Industrial Development Corporation was a strategic and institutional error. We heard about administrative errors and typographical errors. We love to hear about errors. This Government loves to tell us about errors. We are hearing now about strategic and institutional errors ten years after the fact. So during the course of the decline in manufacturing, this strategic and institutional error that was made by the Democratic Labour Party was never recognised. We are going to hear now that the relative indifference performance of manufacturing has to do with an institutional shortcoming, namely that the export promotion aspect of the BIDC needs to be separated back out into a separate entity.

Mr. Speaker, that is a cop out and it is an excuse. Frankly, if you destroy manufacturing, whether you have the promotion entity within the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation or have it separate, is not going to make a difference. So what the Government needs to do is to stop this blame game.

Three elections have occurred, ten years have elapsed, therefore the Government needs to take responsibility for the situation and take the necessary actions. Now I would say that there is a need for some more confidence to inspire our manufacturers.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West touched on this, that the closure of the Barbados National Bank which traditionally was a good source of financing for the manufacturers has negatively impacted that sector, not to mention the closure of the Barbados Development Bank which also was very instrumental in seeing that many of the manufacturing operations and industries generally got a good source of not only financing but technical assistance, something I believe would be needed even more so now in these times where we have seen so many technological advances.

Mr. Speaker, I know that when the Honourable Member for St. Joseph speaks he would talk about all these little things I see in the BIDC Report about what they have done and have not done. For example, a little thing here and a little thing there, funding for working capital needs and a few million dollars here or there. We clearly need to have a more holistic, more dynamic and a more serious approach to getting manufacturing back on some sort of footing. There are challenges, but I do not accept that we should simply throw our hands in the air and say that trade liberalisation is coming so what happens, happens. We have got to struggle to try to keep some semblance of manufacturing on a firm footing in this country. It has served us well in the past and it still has a role to play in the future development of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, on the subject of international business, when the Honourable Member for St. Peter announced that the promotion efforts of this sector would become the beneficiary of an additional \$3 million to promote the services overseas, I remember some of the Honourable Members over there in asides saying: 'You can't say nothing now, because we got you.'

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem in saying that it is good that the Government has seen it fit to put some more money into promoting this sector. As a matter of fact, during the Estimates last year when we debated the international business sector I called for it. As Shadow Minister of International Business I have been very careful in many of my public utterances because I recognised that it is a very funny sector and you do not want individuals who decide to put vast sums of money and to have their companies domiciled here, seeing politicians bickering in the national stage. That does not inspire much confidence, and I do not intend to do that.

However, I would think that they would take my honest to good and constructive advice that putting money to market the services is only part of what has to happen in that sector. I want to know what they are going to be marketing and where, because as I have also said, the product range that we have clearly needs to be looked at.

Mr. Speaker, there has been very little legislation in here relating to that sector in terms of creating new products as happens in many of our competing jurisdictions. This is a sector that we can do very well in. We have a number of comparative advantages with the other jurisdictions in the region as well as throughout the rest of the world, and therefore we need to develop it.

Mr. Speaker, I remember hearing the Honourable Member for St. James Central making a public

statement some time ago that in spite of the Double Taxation Treaty this country has with China, we have not really utilised that Treaty. It is my understanding that the BIDC has not done any serious promotional work to get business from the People's Republic of China. I understand that Hong Kong is now once again part of China, so I believe there could be potential there as well.

House 049 Sequence 55

10:20 a.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, this is not necessarily intended to be a criticism in the true partisan sense of the word. As I said, I am being constructive here but I understand that to be a very delicate sector. Sir, I would like to see, for example, that the marketing initiatives could be use maybe to get into some traditional markets or to train personnel who would be charged with marketing Barbados overseas.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is unwittingly misleading this Honourable House and himself. Only last year, the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation would have, in fact, had a very lengthy visit to China. In fact, arrangements are in place for a group of investors from China, to be in Barbados sometimes in February, 2005.

Sir, that is only for the purpose of assisting the Honourable Member's point.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the intervention. I am aware that some Honourable Members have made trips to China and I hope that it would trickle down to the front-line staff at the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation, so that they can also get to go to China, not only to enjoy the diplomatic enjoyments but that we can also see some real business coming on board. I thank the Honourable Member for that but it is time for it to get into third gear.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the retention of international businesses, once they come here, it has always been a bug-bearer for this Government. Therefore, I hope that while the promotion efforts may not directly impact on that, that Government will recognise that it needs to do more to keep these businesses here because we have seen many of them taking flight in very short times. Therefore, many registered businesses are inactive.

Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has also spoken at length to efforts by this Government to deal with the issue of traffic gridlock. Sir, I support entirely any effort at easing the gridlock of this nation, as I suppose all of us would. I, perhaps, have a larger vested interest in this issue because my constituency. Sir, while I am on that, I would like to thank the people of St. Michael South Central for giving me that opportunity to represent them in Parliament and for giving me the opportunity to make my contribution to the national debate.

Sir, what the people of St. Michael South Central want to know is exactly what are we going to do to

ease this question of traffic. Sir, many of the main arteries of Bridgetown pass through St. Michael South Central. Therefore, this issue is not only one of frustration for those persons but it is a real issue, especially in places such as Collymore Rock, Flagstaff Main Road, Hindsbury Road, Tweedside Road, Belmont Road, Halls Road and Martindales Road, where heading in and out of Bridgetown, traffic is bumper-to-bumper on mornings and evenings.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, this issue of traffic has noise implications for the quality of life, as well as pollution implications for many of the residents of my constituency and, of course, not to mention the safety component. Sir, frequently in trying to beat traffic, drivers tend to take short cuts through some of these communities and the roads are not suited for the kind of fast driving that would occur when someone would be trying to get to work, when they are late.

Sir, we have had serious accidents occurring in my constituency because of that type of driving, where people who would be trying to get to Belmont Road, would be cutting through one of the roads in the Quaker's Road/St. Hills Road/Alkins Road areas. Therefore, this is a very serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, however, I am not convinced that some of what I have heard from the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, is going to deal with this issue of traffic gridlock. The Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto, 2003, has a section called Road Relief. I do not remember exactly what it said but I remember it has in some very useful ideas. It spoke about water taxis, which I know is a favourite of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown. They spoke about park-and-ride, which was mentioned in the Honourable Member's presentation. It also spoke of other things that they would try to do, such as set up a transportation authority.

Mr. Speaker, what was not contained in that Manifesto was anything about flyovers on the ABC Highway. This idea has apparently been recently hatched somewhere. I presume that technical advise was involved. I am just curious exactly how it would assist us in dealing with the real problem of gridlock.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is not the ABC highway. There are areas on the ABC Highway where one would find a backup of traffic, or where the main arteries going into Bridgetown would intercept with the Highway, for example, Collymore Rock, Warrens and Mapp Hill areas. When the ABC Highway was first conceived, and it was conceived by the Barbados Labour Party, at that time they anticipated that there would have been a growth in the number of vehicles in Barbados. That is why when driving on sections of that highway, the verge is so wide because it can be changed to a dual carriageway. In other words, there can be two lanes going in either direction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that maybe Government can look to that issue. Maybe they can look to some of the other ideas that they spoke about in their Manifestos. Sir, perhaps they could look at dealing with the question of getting school children to and from schools in the greater Bridgetown area, because one notices a big difference in traffic when children are on vacation. It certainly cannot cost \$100 million to deal with that. Sir, there are issues with which we could deal that, perhaps, could relate to this question of traffic.

Mr. Speaker, we tend to take the maximum solution but as I have said, I do not know from where the idea of eight flyovers came but I sincerely hope that it is not some knee-jerk reaction to World Cup

2007. I am saying that studies would have to be done. My gut feelings tells me that certainly eight flyovers are too many and ideally I would not like to see any. Flyovers are aesthetically repulsive and we should try to avoid them if we can.

Mr. Speaker, I only hope that we are not simply reacting because of something that a consultant from overseas would have told us needed to happen. It was a consultant from overseas who told us that Greenland was the best place to put the sanitary landfill in Barbados; the Greenland that is now breeding mosquitos.

Mr. Speaker, another concern I have about these eight flyovers is the method of finance that has been chosen. We are hearing that there is going to be a build, operate, lease, transfer arrangement, to make these flyovers a reality. We are also told that Cabinet has approved it. Therefore, most of my colleagues in here know exactly what is going on. As I have said, it was not in the Manifesto but it was hustled from a consultant's office to the Cabinet of Barbados, and it was approved.

Sir, my concern about this \$100 million is that while it is true that Government does not have to put out any money up front, is this not a creative way of looking for financing off the books, so to speak? We already had a debate about the debt situation. I would be very curious to see what is the nature of this \$100 million, build, operate, lease, transfer arrangement. We heard about the 'sweetheart' deal with Barbados Water Authority, \$9.4 million a year. Therefore, we need to understand how we are going to pay for this arrangement.

Sir, in the North Atlantic countries where there are these sorts of turn-key arrangements for highway projects, usually there is toll involved. You cannot have eight or sixteen toll stations on the ABC Highway. It would be out of the question.

H:No.049(56)1030 a.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Clearly, this design, built, lease, operate concept is a creative way for Government to find financing for the project. We have to understand that the young people of Barbados are still going to have to pay for this project and I suspect that it would be at a higher cost than if they had looked for the funds the traditional way, that is, to get financing from development banks and go through the formal process of tendering et cetera. Sir, this is just another creative way of accessing funds, and we on this side, have expressed our concern with our debt situation in this country.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, you have three minutes.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with housing because it impacts on my constituency and is also the problem of the nation. The Stanley Committee in 1943 recommended that a house be built, 20 by 13

and in 2004, the National Housing Corporation are currently selling houses this size.

Sir, am I to tell my constituents that houses that were suggested for low-income Barbadians coming out of the 37 riots is what they have to aspire to occupy now? This is a serious problem we have with housing in our country. I am afraid that ten years on, that Government has to recognise that it is not doing enough.

We heard from the Prime Minister that in future he would offer a rent-to-purchase option to the poorest of the poor. We are ten years into a Government that is talking about addressing the poorest of the poor in the future on a basic need like shelter. Mr. Speaker, is this future 20,30 or 40 years from now? We certainly hope it is not because this is a very frustrating situation for many people in this country including my constituents.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House in relation to house sizes. The recommendation made in the 1940s arose out a situation where household sizes were at that time an average number of six members per household. Today, the household size is between two and three per household so we are talking about putting two or three people in the same size house that six would have occupied before. Perhaps the Honourable Member might wish to note the changes in household sizes and, therefore, occupancy level per house and comfort level relative to the number of people in occupation.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that the poorest of the poor is being told that they have to wait for the future. This is another admission of failure but we have an idea of the reason for the confusion. The Honourable Member for St. James South is talking about occupancy rates and house size but I never spoke about the number of people occupying the property, I dealt with the size of the house. I understand the reasoning of the Honourable Member because that is the confusion that is existing in the minds of persons responsible for directing the housing policy of this Government.

Sir, as I said, the decision to repositioning our foreign exchange earning sector is an admission of failure, the decision to deal with the poorest of poor for housing in future is also a failure. There is a lack of strategic focus on the part of this Government and I, therefore, find myself associating with the message of hope presented here yesterday by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. I associate myself with all of the ideas we heard and will continue to hear from this side during the course of this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER:

the Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the honour and the privilege to make my humble contribution to this debate. Unlike the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central who just took his seat, I must start off my contribution to this debate by first thanking the people of Christ Church West for

certainly having the confidence in me for giving me the opportunity to make my contribution to this debate, my second to the Budget and Financial Statement.

Sir, I want to go through the districts in my constituency because I must leave out no one. I want to thank the people of Sargeants Village, Fordes Road, Clapham, Simmons Lands, Bonnetts, Worthing View, St. Matthias, Harts Gap, Rockley, Blue Waters, Navy Gardens, Marine Gardens, Club Morgan, Rendezvous and Barclays Tenantry.

Sir, all those people in those districts with simple but complete understanding of the contribution that I would be able to make to this Parliament to be able to represent them in a forcible and resolute manner, have come together and spoken just like how the people of this country Barbados have come together on three different occasions and spoken and told the rest that we have confidence in the management of the Barbados Labour Party and its leadership. Sir, this is what the people of this country did just like the people of Christ Church West have done for me.

Sir, everyday, I postulate what I can do to fulfill the duty that they have instilled in me. I cannot help everybody all the time but I want the people of Christ Church West to know that I am doing the best I can with the limited resources I have at my disposal. Mr. Speaker, with the help of God, I will continue to do the best I can. I have a member of my constituency who I consider to be my spiritual advisor. Whenever I see her, she tells me that in everything I do I must put God first and I always remember her advice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wholeheartedly support the proposals of the Budget proposals laid by the Honourable Prime Minister. There were well thought out, visionary and were proposals to improve and develop the infrastructure and the social development of this country. In particular, I want to single out Project Oasis which is an important measure that has given me the opportunity to see success in Christ Church West. I took the opportunity to take the 'block community' on a tour of all the 'blocks' in Christ Church West and we had many young people to go on the various project that Project Oasis has to offer. I was heartened by the response and I continue to be heartened by their success. Sir, many got into computer training programmes, computer repairs, leather craft and many of them are interested in bobcat operation. These are people who otherwise would not have had an opportunity because they may not have had the prerequisite 'O'Levels or training in English or mathematics to get the basic entry into tertiary education.

H49/10:

40 a.m.

Sequence 57

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

Sir, I further support the doubling of the grant from \$1 million to \$2 million as well as expanding and extending the courses that they can become involved in. I salute The 'Block' Committee as well because

they continue to be excellent for the young people of this country. I have to say that because I am the youngest Member of this side.

Sir, I want to draw reference to the youngest Honourable Member on the other side because the Governor of the Central Bank made it clear in her statement, which is published in today's newspaper, that the concept of having to pay for tertiary education is not a Government policy. I want to make it clear that it was her view and that it is not a Government policy and I want to make that clear. I wholeheartedly support Project Oasis.

Sir, e-government is another policy in the Budgetary proposals. Mr. Speaker, not only will e-government enhance how Government carries out its day to day business but it will improve the use of time and management of information through e-government. Certainly, I support licence registration, payment of licence fees through e-government but I want to suggest something else.

Sir, as you are aware, every year in January dentists, accountants, doctors and pharmacists have to go to the Registry and pay their professional registration fees. I want to suggest that this is another area where professionals can pay their registration fees through e-government. This could be a simple process where one would use a credit card to pay their fees. This would be a vast improvement and I believe that it will certainly increase productivity in the public sector in this country.

Sir, I also want to support preschool education. I do not think that any Honourable Member in this Honourable House would believe this is a bad idea. Preschool education is another initiative that all could benefit from. Sir, the refurbishing of buildings and creating new facilities to accommodate 1 600 children between the ages of 3-5 is an excellent initiative.

Mr. Speaker, in Christ Church West there is an area already owned by the National Housing Corporation and they said that they are not prepared to put any housing units on that land. This land is big enough to accommodate a Day Care Centre. I want to urge the Minister responsible to look at that tract of land to the north western section of Bonnetts because I think that it will be ideal to have a Day Care Centre in that section of Bonnetts. This is an opportunity where more parents, and young mothers in particular, can leave their children and go out in search of employment as necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to support the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) project. This is another excellent project that goes towards improving service excellence in this country. I want to say a little bit about this project and how it dovetails with Barbados Export Inc. and the tourism aspect of this country.

Sir, if a businessman wants to improve his business, he has to do two things. The first thing he has to do is to improve the delivery of service to his customer. This is absolutely essential in order to get repeat customers who have experienced the good service which you produced. Sir, apart from developing a good service he then has to look for new markets and customers to be able to extend that good service too. Sir, I would imagine this is the reason the Barbados Export Inc. came into being.

Sir, it makes no sense providing service and having a good product and service and only marketing it to those people who have already experienced it. He has to be prepared to expand and look for new markets, clients, ventures and opportunities to sell his excellent service.

I think that it goes hand in hand as we continue to improve the manner in which we do business, as we continue to improve service, not only to our visitors but also to other members of the Barbadian public. Tourism is our business and service is the way we should do it. It is important that we improve our service and should be effective in how we deliver the service.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to spend a little time on the traffic situation in this country. I look forward to the fly-overs that are proposed in this country. I think that they would improve the traffic situation. I also think that the engineers have put a lot of thought into this proposal and they will continue to be a part of the total traffic solution in this country. Again, like the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, I have to agree with him on this, that is the aspect of the schools particularly in the Greater Bridgetown area.

Sir, like most Honourable Members in this Honourable House, I have done my research. Do you know that there are 67 schools in the Greater Bridgetown area? Out of those 67 schools there is a total of 24,444 students attending those schools. Everybody in Barbados knows that when the schools are on vacation the traffic situation is significantly reduced. Therefore, I would like to suggest to Government that we should look at a shuttle service for school children, in particular, because I have seen an extremely successful private shuttle providing a similar service in the Bridgetown area.

Mr. Speaker, those of you who travel Collymore Rock regularly would have seen that there is a private shuttle service called Gillians Shuttle Service, where people drop their children off at that location and the children are then shuttled to school and the parents can then leave Bridgetown. This business is obviously a success and I think that is something that we can offer on a grander scale.

Mr. Speaker, having 67 schools in the Greater Bridgetown area with 24,000 students having to get to school, it is certainly something we should look at. Parents can take the children to locations where they can be picked up by shuttle and use that shuttle service to take the children to and from school. That is one aspect of the traffic management that I would like to suggest. I can also make this a document of the Honourable House if it is so requested.

Sir, there is another suggestion that I would like to make and that is the crossings over the Constitution River.

49/10:50 a.m.

Sequence 58

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 59, 10:
50 a.m.

Continuation of Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

As you know at this time, one of the backlogs is the ability to get people over the Constitution River, be it at the bridge, the passing behind the hospital, John Beckles Drive, or higher up at the Globe. If we can have another crossing over the Constitution River that will be able to reduce the traffic situation to get into the Bridgetown area.

Sir, another difficulty is parking when we get into Bridgetown. We know of the many times that we have arrived into Bridgetown and cannot find a place to park and have to circle around which contributes to the traffic situation in the greater Bridgetown area. These are just some humble suggestions on how we could improve the traffic situation in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the other measures that I would like to address, just like the Honourable Member for St. Michael West spoke about, are the changes in the tax schedule. Increases in the tax-free threshold from \$17 500 to \$20 000 decreases in the marginal rate from 40 per cent to 37½ per cent which contribute to taking a greater number of people off the tax roll. These are certainly important measures to give to those people who otherwise would not be able to have that greater amount of cash.

Mr. Speaker, I will speak a little about the economy of this country. The Prime Minister in his discourse told us that real gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 2.9 per cent. Honourable Members on the Other Side are on record of asking us to prove that increase and I am going to attempt to do that now.

I start with the flagship which is tourism and I want to get the figures absolutely correct. I am looking at the Economic and Financial Statistics for October 2004 and I will compare the tourism records of the two administrations, the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party.

The best year under the Democratic Labour Party administration was 1989, where the total number of tourism arrivals was 461 259. Sir, let us compare that to 2003 under the Barbados Labour Party, where tourism arrivals were 532 211, an increase of just under 70 000.

Sir, let us look also at cruise ship passengers, the best year under the Democratic Labour Party administration showed 337 100 arrivals, in comparison to the Barbados Labour Party which were 559 119 arrivals, more than 200 000 more cruise ship arrivals in this country.

Sir, but I go further. I now want to look at jobs and again, compare the Democratic Labour Party to the Barbados Labour Party. Firstly, we see that in 1988, 1989 and 1990, there are no statistics available. I wonder why but let us go into 1991. The best that the Democratic Labour Party could muster were 107 000 jobs with an unemployment rate of 17.3 per cent. Compare that to the current rates today and the numbers employed. This means that jobs are available for the average person. It also means that mothers and fathers could get an opportunity to go out there and make some money so they can feed their children.

In Barbados today, 134.6 thousand people are employed with an unemployment rate reduced now to single digits, 9.6 per cent. There is something that a lot of people do not take note of that I have paid special interest to with respect to this economic survey, and it has to do with participation rates. Under

this Barbados Labour Party administration, the best participation rate ever recorded since 1987 in this country has been achieved by the Barbados Labour Party where there is a 70.6 per cent participation rate of the people in this country. This means a greater number of people than ever before are out there seeking to get gainful employment for their family.

Sir, I go further about the economy. Let us look now at interest rates. At the height of their problems, the Democratic Labour Party interest rates and by that, 15 per cent that means for every \$100 that poor people in this country borrowed during the 1991 period, they had to pay back 15 per cent and that was compounded, and look at what the selected interest rate is in commercial banks is today. It is between 6.5 and 8.5 per cent. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, you can on occasion find interest rates below 6 per cent as we have all seen advertised by the Bank of Butterfield. Would you say that the economy of this country has improved? I certainly would.

Mr. Speaker, let us go further into mortgages and in particular, mortgages of private dwellings which I am going to use constantly. Sir, in 1994, private dwellings mortgages were a paltry \$34.5 million. Today in 2004, private dwelling mortgages are \$508 million. This tells us that there is confidence in the economy and in the country, more people in this country having access to money to buy and build their own homes, more people in this country having an opportunity to have a legacy for their children. Would you say that is an improved economy? I certainly would.

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to all aspects of the private sector, especially the sectorial aspects. We have deposits by activity in the commercial banks, in tourism from \$12 million to \$46 million; in the distribution sector from \$43 million to \$114 million; in construction from \$11 million to \$66 million; in other contributors from \$131 million to \$482 million, almost an eight fold increase in construction. Mr. Speaker, would you say that the economy of this country has improved? I certainly would.

Mr. Speaker, the best one of all comes right at the front page of the economic statistics, the best economic indicator which this country understands, the best economic indicator which the people of Barbados appreciate is that we are no longer under the IMF regime. House 049, sequence 59, 11:0014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

We are no longer under any credit from the International Monetary Fund. I am happy to report that the credit aspect from the International Monetary Fund continues to be a blank. Mr. Speaker, this is something that this country appreciates and understands. Would you not say that the economy is doing better, Mr. Speaker, I certainly would.

Mr. Speaker, I could not come to this Honourable House without reporting on the contribution the National Petroleum Corporation continues to make to the development of this economy. I am happy to report that the National Petroleum Corporation continues on its expansion programme and has been able to contribute over 2 600 new connections to our grid. Indeed, we have plans for the further connection of another 5 000 households to the grid. The Honourable Members on the other side would also be able to benefit from that distribution. I am seeing the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central

intimating the people from Carrington Village and so on. We are also hoping that the people from Kingsland, Bonnetts, Pleasant Hall and St. Thomas would be able to benefit from the expansion programme as well.

Mr. Speaker, natural gas is a cleaner and cheaper alternative. Mr. Speaker, I am appealing to those who already have natural gas in their area, I did this last year and I will do it again this year, to make use of the grid and do their connections. This would not only benefit them as individuals. Once they sign up in their numbers, we would be able to expand the network to other people who do not now benefit from natural gas. We have had a programme in the past where you would just pay \$50 of the installation fee and then you would pay the balance over a one-year period. I would not want to suppose what the Board would do, but I believe that the Board would be looking at repeating this incentive over the coming period.

Mr. Speaker, I could not come to this House and make my presentation without making a plea for things in Christ Church West. The roads in Sargeants Village are badly in need of repairs. I would want to encourage the Minister responsible to come and go with me again on a tour and see about the roads in Sargeants Village. I also want him to come and see about the roads in Simmons Land, Worthing View, Rockley and St. Matthaïs. We need those roads so that the people of those districts would be empowered and feel confident and good about where they are living and what they are doing. They are contributing to the economy of this country and they too should benefit from the success in this economy.

I also want to remind the Minister of Education, and Sports that the area at Bonnetts has already been bought and acquired by Government and I encourage him to look again at providing the multifaceted hard courts at Bonnetts next to Lewis Satellite because this has been promised to the people of Christ Church West. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I believe in solutions. The people in Bonnetts have been crying out for a sporting facility and I would again urge the Minister to look again at getting this sports facility started.

Sir, I would like to conclude by saying that the Barbados Labour Party administration continues to make strides in improving and developing this economy and this country. I am proud to be a member of this hardworking team. I am proud to be able to serve under a visionary leader. I am proud to be a part of the team that has brought this country back from the brink of catastrophic devastation. Mr. Speaker, let us put this country on a good economic and social footing. Let us continue to support the good work of the Barbados Labour Party. I thank you.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak in support of the Economic and Financial Policies as enunciated by the Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Member for St. Peter. I believe that it is important to reiterate the fact that this Statement is not a budgetary proposal but a Statement of our economic and financial policies that are expected to take us on a growth track over the short and medium term.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there is anyone in this Honourable House who has failed to recognise that the Barbadian economy has been buffeted in recent times by international developments, some unforeseen, such as the tragedies of 9\11. It is always a remarkable thing when you reflect on the fact that this small country with its small economic base has been able to weather the storm.

I recently had occasion, Mr. Speaker, to be present at Independence celebrations in New York and Boston. Mr. Speaker, I was heartened when the Barbadians in the diaspora who you might feel are not well-informed on what is happening here said that they are proud in the United States of America to see that Barbados has progressed to the point where we are third in the hemisphere in terms of our developmental stage and in terms of our standard of living and also that they are proud at the way this economy has recovered in the last ten years and continue to express support for this Government. I had the opportunity to meet, I believe it was the President of the Democratic Labour Party overseas branch in New York, who was pleased to laud the efforts of the Barbados Government as it stands today at trying to make sure that this Government remains on even keel.

Sir, the fact of the matter though is that this is not an endeavour that is a task of the Barbados Labour Party administration alone, it is an endeavour that requires all Barbadians including the Members of Her Majesty's Opposition to join with us not only in the National Initiative of Services Excellence programme but in all of the efforts that this enlightened Government is taking to ensure that the Government and the people of Barbados is able to do well and to achieve.

Sir, it seems clear that the Honourable Member who leads her Majesty's Opposition was forced to drag up old election speeches and couple them together under the label, 'The Reply to the Prime Minister's Economic and Financial Policies'. How else could you explain it having been taken on that journey down, what he might call memory lane, when he chose to bring up the Greenland Landfill and spoke about the Transport Board as it was ten years ago and a whole set of things that we clearly recollect him speaking on in the last election and the election before that and only managed to collide with the concept of this particular document, 'The Economic and Financial Policies' as he reached near the end of his discourse. We on this side remember only too well what his memory lane had in store for us. It is a thing that is so ingrained in the Barbadian hearts, minds and psyche that it is hardly necessary for us to take anybody on that journey down memory lane to the perilous days we suffered in the late 80s and early 90s. Our vision has always been one that takes us to the future and one that is looking forward. It is in that context that these financial policies have been pronounced.

House 049 Sequence 60

11:10 a.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for Industry and International Business, I am pleased with the measures that are being implemented, to try to ensure that Barbados continues to do well in the International Business Sector and to try to ensure that manufacturing remains viable.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt in anybody's mind that the commitments made by the Democratic Labour Party in 1994, which launched us on the road to trade liberalisation, wreaked havoc on the manufacturing sector. What this administration has been assiduously working on over the last number of years, is trying to ensure that manufacturing remains viable.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by reminding all Barbadians that while this Government is committed to seeing that every business and every commercial venture has the opportunity for success, we must not blind ourselves into thinking that every business will, in fact, succeed.

Mr. Speaker, the role of Government is to create and to maintain an enabling environment that the entrepreneurial efforts of all Barbadians will see success as the reward but I reiterate that all businesses will not succeed and this is especially so in the manufacturing sector.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is true that we must recognise that the issues we face in our manufacturing sector are not uniquely Barbadian. The issues that we face in our manufacturing sectors are issues that are being faced in the United States of America, Canada, Jamaica, and all over the world. Sir, that is as a consequence of globalisation because in the same way that all of the benefits come to one's front door, all of the perils will, of course, find the same path.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from a document which I will be making a document of the Honourable House called: "Manufacturing in America A Comprehensive Strategy to Address the Challenges to US Manufacturers." In this document at page 5, the authors say

"The US manufacturers will face constant pressure, not only to lower prices but also to increase the value that they add to their products. Competition from low cost producers create an incentive to move up the value chain in the direction of higher margin goods, where the conditions of competition are not based on price alone. Increasingly, success in manufacturing will depend on the ability to integrate new technologies rapidly into both product and operation."

Mr. Speaker, let us reflect for one moment on how opposite is that very statement to manufacturing in Barbados. Sir, our manufacturers are also saying that they, too, are going to be facing constant pressure from lower prices; that they, too, have to respond to this pressure by increasing the value that they add to their products; they, too, are feeling the pressure of competition; and that they, too, recognise that success will depend on the ability to integrate new technologies rapidly into both production and operation.

Mr. Speaker, Barbadian manufacturers are not operating in a vacuum or in a bubble. Sir, exactly the same challenges that are facing our manufacturers are facing manufacturers abroad but this Government is clear on the kind of strategy that it needs to implement, in order to maintain the viability of our manufacturing concerns.

Mr. Speaker, in the face of the global challenges, we have determined that the strategy that our manufacturers have to embark on will constitute three components. Sir, the first component is that they must move towards competitiveness, which is the key. Secondly, once they have established their enterprises to be competitive in price and in quality, they also have to tackle the issue of market access. Thirdly, they have to tackle the issue of increasing market share.

Mr. Speaker, if we can look at these individual items, the matter of competitiveness will be the result of improved technology and a willingness to embrace technology. It will and has always required businesses to train and to retrain their workers. In today's environment, competitiveness requires that companies meet international standards such as the International Standards Organisation and HASSET

and all of these have technological ramifications.

Mr. Speaker, within the last two years, one of our commercial enterprises in Barbados has expended in the region of BDS\$1 million to reach HASSET compliance. Just last year alone, one of our leading meat process manufacturers was able to achieve HASSET compliance but at a tremendous cost.

Mr. Speaker, in a recent discussion I had with a soft drink producer, he indicated that his company was looking to buy a piece of machinery at a cost of approximately \$5 million, which would so increase their production capacity, that they would have to find avenues to take up the slack.

Mr. Speaker, recognising that competitiveness is an important leg on which our manufacturing sector must stand, this Government has, over the years, and continues in this Economic Policy Statement, to make sure that measures are in place to support manufacturers. The Technical Assistance Fund will benefit from an additional \$1 million a year, for the next five years. We have provided funding through the Enterprise Growth Fund at what could only be considered to be concessionary interest rates. We have provided several windows which are available to manufacturers and small businesses generally, to ensure that the capital is available at a reasonable cost, so that they can undertake such changes as they need to make to their businesses.

Mr. Speaker, while the Honourable Members of Her Majesty's Opposition may be squawking at these things, the Barbadian manufacturers are daily recognising that they need to embrace these new technologies. Therefore, the question is: What is our measure of manufacturing success? Is it to be a labour-intensive operation, or is it to be an efficient operation with greater productivity? I believe that all Honourable Members on the Other Side recognise that the true test is not a simple matter of how many persons are employed, but whether one's manufacturing success story is predicated on productivity.

Mr. Speaker, a significant number of our manufacturing concerns have achieved unprecedented levels of productivity over the last few years, and a simple canvassing of them would indicate this without doubt. Therefore, our manufacturers, granted that the amount of persons employed are not hovering at over 9,000 persons, but in point of fact, these manufacturing concerns have been forced to respond to competitiveness issues by embracing new technologies.

Mr. Speaker, is that now what is happening in agriculture? In agriculture, in order to maintain a reasonable level of productivity, we had to embrace mechanical harvesting. Sir, that has, of course, displaced agricultural workers, to the point where there are fewer agricultural workers involved in the harvesting of sugar cane than before. Sir, most of those displaced workers have found jobs elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, when the Opposition cries out about manufacturing being in a decline, the truth is, they need to know that, in fact, productivity has increased. H:No.049(61)1120 a.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Sir, if manufacturing has been such a failure then, how do you explain the fact that several of our

companies like Barbados Bottlers recently celebrated 60 years of bottling Coca Cola in Barbados and are producing more product lines than ever before? Sir, many of our manufacturers like Oran Limited and HIPAC are increasing the number of persons employed, the capital invested and the return on the investment is far greater than before.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of market access the foreign trade section of the Ministry of Finance has been working assiduously in negotiations in WTO and I believe that may be mentioned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs but I would say that market is one of the things for which we continue to fight.

Mr. Speaker, may I say that we are trying to make sure that Barbadian products are able to enter foreign markets and we are putting things in place to see to it that they get there. The Minister of Finance has enunciated the policy of creating an entity called "Export Barbados" which would hopefully reverse the negative and short-sighted decision of the Democratic Labour Party in 1992 when they chose to shut down the Export Promotion Corporation.

Sir, this Government recognises the significance of having a dedicated agency because the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation has been carrying this battle but we recognise that we need to jump to another level and this new agency announced by the Prime Minister is going to be the one to take us there.

Mr. Speaker, I am informed that most of the furniture in the Hilton has been locally manufactured, that the drapery has been locally manufactured and that in terms of speciality foods there is tremendous connection between our speciality food manufacturers and the tourism sector. We are going to be putting systems in place to ensure that these synergies are exploited.

Mr. Speaker, the success in our manufacturing will not only come where we actually manufacture goods because we have to recognise that our ideas and capacities are capable of being exploited and turned into solid investment opportunities. I am delighted that my Ministry has had a pivotal role to play in the matter of setting up a joint venture enterprise between Nigerian concerns and Barbadian solar water heater manufacturers and to see Barbadian investment reaching to that side of the Atlantic.

Mr. Speaker, we recognise that it is important to have a champion and this Government intends to support this venture. It will see not only solar water heaters manufactured in Barbados and shipped across the Atlantic but it will see Barbadian investment in a joint venture vehicle in Nigeria building solar water heaters with Barbadian technology, know-how, marketed and installed with Barbadian expertise.

Mr. Speaker, while there are challenges to the manufacturing sector, there are not Barbadian-built challenges but global challenges and all markets recognise this. Our strategies are being put in place to ensure that we are able to weather those storms.

Mr. Speaker, on the matter of international business, I am happy to report to this Honourable House that on a year-to-year comparison, we have registered more IBCs than over the same period last year. We have shown a doubling of the number of societies with restricted liability, increases in insurance and exempt insurance companies and these figures show that Barbados continues to be a favoured domicile. Again, the question is what is our strategic focus.

This Government has long said that our strategic focus is to recognise the importance Barbados can play in the tax planning and competitive strategies of multinational corporations. Instead of being a mere player where people come and do business, we are working hard to see economic activity being created in Barbados in the context of international business.

Mr. Speaker, we have been engaged in constant dialogue with the Barbados International Business Association (BIBA) because we recognise that a successful strategy will be based on collaboration. The right model is one of strategic collaboration between the private sector and the public sector with the aim of uncovering where the chief obstacles to success maybe and removing them. The measures that have been announced in this particular policy statement reflect the result of a close collaboration with the membership of BIBA and with all our constituent interest.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that you may put all legislative framework in place but unless you actually get to the matters of business facilitation which is the critical issue that help our business to work, we would have achieved nothing.

The measure to remove the Stamp Duty on the alienation of IBC shares is such an important initiative. The issue arises here because in the IBC Act, the dealings of an IBC are exempt from stamp duty but the legal position appears to be that if a company wants to pledge shares in an IBC to secure a debt, then that mortgage would be subject to stamp duty.

Mr. Speaker, reports have come to us where the stamp duty on these types of transactions would be in excess of \$200 million because some of these multinationals are pledging shares in IBCs to secure huge sums of money but when the service providers tell them that the duty on the transaction is \$1.5 million, they immediately pull up stakes. Quite rightly, they argue that our sector is supposed to increase competitiveness but we have a stamp duty regime that is, in this context, punitive. Mr. Speaker, they pick up from Barbados, go to St. Lucia or another jurisdiction and do their transactions where such a mortgage would not attract any stamp duty.

We have heard the cry of many service providers and have taken the position that we are not losing anything because these companies do not do the transactions through Barbados. It is important for us to maintain these opportunities and, therefore, that is the genesis of this so-called initiative. I have already received several calls lauding the Prime Minister and this Government for this effort. In the last eight months, we have received no less than twelve letters dealing with it, we have grappled with it and recognise that this change is in the best interest of Barbadian business.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps equally important is the support for the export of professional services. We are going to be functioning in a Caribbean Single Market and Economy and we need to make sure that our Barbadian professional service providers are standing on exactly the same footing as their counterparts, for example, in Trinidad. H49/11:30 a.m.

Sequence 62

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of: Hon. D. D. MARSHALL In the other jurisdictions they have limited liability partnerships available to them. Mr. Speaker, They have the opportunity for companies to provide audits. Therefore, we are saying to our accountants that we want them to compete in a Caribbean Single Market and Economy or beyond but yet there are institutional or legislative measures which serve to humble them in that exercise. Sir, this Government stands committed to removing anything which hobbles our service providers in terms of competing in the smaller region of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy or the economic space beyond. Therefore, the accountants have welcomed this particular initiative.

Sir, this is again the result of clear and active collaboration between the private sector and the Government. This is not a case where we are pandering to interest of any private sector group. It is a case where we are trying to ensure that our framework is consistent with international best practices and the highest possible standard, but moreover ensures that our professionals stand on equal footing with their competitors abroad.

Mr. Speaker, on the matter of the increased budget for marketing and promotion, this is something that we have fought long and hard for and it is something that is most welcome at this time. Sir, all of the international players tell us that in Barbados we have the right mix of legislative instruments, up-to-date legislation, high regulatory standards, good service providers and all of the things that we need but in many respects the message has not been going as far afield or with the kind of intensity as it should.

Sir, for example, Canada remains our largest market and permit me to digress on this point. The statistics this year show that of the international business companies that have been registered, 50 of them have some component of local ownership and of that 50, 34 of them are completely Barbadian owned.

Sir, some years ago the International Business Companies legislation was amended to permit Barbadians to own International Business Companies and this particular statistic speaks to the success of that particular measure. More and more Barbadians are seeing the international financial services sector as a sector for them and not being a sector that is for foreign interest and it comes up daily in their tax planning exercises. I just want to mention that so that Honourable Members in this House would understand and see in stark terms the success that we have seen in that particular initiative.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member, conclude in one minute, please.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

That is a hard task Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER:

That is extra time.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

The time has come where we as a Government must now seek to ensure that the Barbados brand in the context of financial services reaches markets with greater intensity. I have requested the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation to come up with a more aggressive promotional exercise in the

coming years. It will see us using new models, expertise that is not locally available and more importantly this particular initiative, increasing it from \$2 million to \$5 million will include the much needed private sector participation.

Sir, I am heartened by the measures. The preschool access would help my constituency and we are grateful. The milk is now only available in schools in urban districts and I especially laud it being extended to all Barbadian schools. The mark of Project Oasis is being felt in my constituency and I, therefore, want to support this Resolution with all of my heart and passion because I am satisfied that the people of St. Joseph and all of Barbados will see the results in the short, medium and long-term.

Sir, with those few words I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North. Before the Honourable Member speaks, I want to remind Honourable Members that we have two more speakers and we must break at 12.30 p.m. Somebody will have less time and I leave that to the two Honourable Members to decide.

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Speaker, I like most Barbadians am very pleased with the measures announced in this Parliament on Tuesday. The measures are to ensure that the gains that we have made since 1994 are not eroded on the alter of political expediency. This Government has maintained its record of announcing no new taxes either in or out of Parliament over the past several years. We can really ask when was the last time in our history has it been that a Government for so long a period of time has maintained a policy of no increases in taxes outside the context of an election budget?

Sir, this Government has to be commended for moving us away from the situation where people tend to listen to a Budget or a Financial and Economic Statement to hear the question being asked, how much taxes and other charges are going to be increased? We have reached the point where we tend to hear, by how much taxes or other charges will be decreased? We see in this Economic Statement a reduction in income taxes across the board for all Barbadians and they welcome the adjustment to the tax band which has benefitted thousands of us.

Mr. Speaker, there is really nothing in this Financial and Economic Statement for Barbadians to complain about and they have not been complaining. Things in this country are going as well as can be expected in the circumstances and I am going to take a look at a few economic indicators to confirm this.

Sir, our inflation rate has been at 1 per cent for the 12-month period ending July 2004. Our rate of unemployment for both the second and third quarters of this year was below 10 per cent, which is almost 2 per cent less for the corresponding period in 2003. Our long-stay tourist arrivals grew by 8.8 per cent and our cruise passenger numbers increased by 25 per cent for the first 9 months of this year when compared with the same period last year. I do not have the individual statistics, which are not yet available for that period in terms of arrivals from various countries, but certainly if we go back to the first 6 months when those figures are available we will see that arrivals grew from every country, the United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada and every CARICOM country. The only place that went against the trend was continental Europe where there was a contraction of 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, also the number of licences issued to international businesses increased by 10 per cent this year when compared to the first 9 months of last year and our net international reserves are now over \$2 billion, which is almost twice the level considered to be safe. Sir, these are the sort of economic indicators we tend to look at to determine if a country is doing well or not.

Mr. Speaker, if you make a comparison with all the countries in the region, which time will not permit me to do, you will see that in every other country we have done better in many if not every economic indicator that was reported in our Central Bank report, whether it was Guyana, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago or the OECS, in every case Barbados has done better. Barbados has also done better in the case of inflation, unemployment, tourists arrivals or whatever economic indicator we look at, Barbados has done better than our regional counterparts. Mr. Deputy Speaker Barbadians can be pleased with the way in which this administration is handling the affairs of the state on their behalf.

Sir, I want to say that I am very pleased that Government has continued to ensure that every year something is placed in the Economic Statement for the improvement of the small business sector. In 1994 the small business sector breathed a sigh of relief that the then Democratic Labour Party administration was changed. They breathed a sigh of relief and extended a hand for help because they were feeling very stifled and assistance to them by the Democratic Labour Party was almost nonexistent.

H49/ 11:

40 a.m.

Sequence 63

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 64, 11:

40 a.m.

Continuation of Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN:

We extended that helping hand and we now have a very strong bond with the small business sector in this country. I have already recited on many occasions the many things we did in a very quick time, to respond to the concerns being raised by the small business sector. For example, the funding of a secretariat for the Small Business Association, the passing of the Small Business Development Act, and the fact that we put in the Estimates, a sum of money to cover one half of the cost of incorporating under the Companies Act of Barbados, by a small business, so that it could in fact benefit from the concessions made in the Small Business Development Act.

Mr. Speaker, more important, we also established a number of lending agencies to ensure that money was made available to a number of players in the small business sector, because it has been cash that has been the problem in most cases, for the development of the small business sector.

It is right that today I take the opportunity to give some updated figures on the performance of the

major lending agencies, the three I like to refer to are the Fund Access, the Urban Enterprises Fund and the Rural Enterprises Fund for the public to decide if these institutions are not working.

The Opposition has already made their position clear that they do not think the funds are worthwhile and are not working but the figures that I will quote would show that they are worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, from inception to November 30, this year, Fund Access has disbursed 496 loans, a total value of \$9.2 million and thereby creating some 569 jobs in the process.

The Urban Enterprises Fund has disbursed 475 loans to a total value of \$4.2 million and created approximately some 480 jobs in the process.

The Rural Enterprises Fund has disbursed 572 loans to a total value of \$4.7 million and thereby created some 575 jobs in the process.

In total therefore, Mr. Speaker, from just these three lending agencies, we have a total of 1 543 loans to a total value of \$18 100 000 and the number of jobs created are some 1 624 by just those three Government lending agencies. Sir, the Opposition can continue to say that they are not working and I will continue to cite the figures to show that they are, in fact, working.

Mr. Speaker, being responsive as we are to concerns raised by individuals and members of various sectors of this economy, we recognise that some concerns were being raised about these funds, and in particular, about the operation of Fund Access. Therefore, as part of the process of consultation that we use as a Government, a number of meetings were held with the small business sector, particularly those who were making complaints about Fund Access. It was clear that although the Fund was producing and yielding results, some improvements could be made. There were too many obstacles, bottle necking and some red tape and we felt that better could have been done.

Therefore, after these meetings and full consultation, a number of measures were decided upon to make these funds work better. I will highlight three of those measures to see how we have advanced the process even further.

The first measure it was decided would be introduced was that there had to be a freeing up of the lending process itself, by requiring Fund Access in particular to take some risks, in terms of its loan operations and these risks were to be much higher than those taken by commercial banks and other traditional commercial lending agencies.

Sir, commercial banks look at the bottom line. They are not risk oriented. No matter they charge you a ton of money for the slightest service they provide to you, no matter how much money you have in your savings account, they never take in risks in terms of their lending portfolio. Clearly, some institution had to step forward to take this risk and the Government mandated Fund Access to start to look at its operations differently from how it had been looking at them before, and break away from the traditional commercial bank type mind set that was averse to risk, because you have to engage in risk lending, if poor people and small enterprises that have good ideas and good projects are to stand any chance, whatsoever, of being successful in the operations.

Mr. Speaker, we are not saying that Fund Access or any Government lending agency is going to throw away money. Certainly, they are going to exercise caution, but they are now mandated to see their role differently and to take some reasonable risks when making a decision on loan applications.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Fund Access' minimum loan size was \$50 000 with a maximum repayment period of five years at a whopping interest rate of 11.5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, though this was working, it was clearly not acceptable, that is too high. Restrictions are too onerous and it disqualified a number of persons from qualifying for assistance from Fund Access.

Mr. Speaker, those requirements have been changed from January 1, 2004 so that the maximum loan amount permitted from Fund Access has been doubled from \$50 000 to \$100 000, repayable over a maximum of not five but ten years and at an interest rate of not 11.5 per cent but now only 6 per cent. This has already been yielding results.

Mr. Speaker, from January to the end of November 2004 because of these changes in the requirements Fund Access this year alone over that nine-month period, was able to disburse some \$2.9 million in loans to a large number of applicants. In fact that was almost \$1 million more than ever previously disbursed by Fund Access during the course of any one financial year, so the measures introduced are working.

Mr. Speaker, most important in my view, the Enterprise Growth Fund which used to provide only equity financing, venture capital, from January 1, 2004, began to provide loan financing starting from \$100 000.

I see that this year, the Prime Minister has indicated that a further \$1 million is going to be injected in the Small Business Venture Capital Inc. and that is laudable, but the fact is that since the Enterprise Growth Fund was allowed to expand its portfolio from equity financing to loans, there has been a significant jump as well in the number of persons who have gone forward to the Enterprise Growth Fund for loans, as opposed to the number of persons who have gone ahead for assistance by way of equity financing.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that a serious look has to be taken because the Small Business Venture Capital Inc. over eight years, has only injected capital into ten businesses. The Enterprise Growth Fund has shown that if you broaden the portfolio from equity financing to loan financing, you immediately get a rush of people for loans.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the time has come when we need to recognise that Barbadians seem averse to the concept of equity financing. It seems to be culturally out of sync with the business ethos and therefore, we have to make a decision, not to try to force things down people's throats by recognising to what people are responding. In the same way that because of the Enterprise Growth Fund's expansion into the area of loans we are seeing an increase in applicants, I believe that we should look also at doing the same in relation to the Small Business Venture Capital Inc. and also the Innovation Fund, where again, Mr. Speaker, the numbers of persons coming forward for assistance have not been as great as expected. Therefore, I fully support the measures in relation to small business development with those two provisos.

Mr. Speaker, this continued assistance to the small business sector is part of Government's philosophy that it cannot be business as usual. Barbados cannot expect to confront the challenges we have to face as a nation and have business as usual, so literally, it cannot be business as usual.

The world is now perhaps even more merciless than it ever was and it is really at a stage where only the fittest will survive. It is therefore in that context that we need to compete effectively in this rapidly changing world. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, this new national initiative for service excellence coming at this time, is extremely important and very timely.

This initiative seems to place the burden on business enterprises to clean up their act and to provide excellent service.

House 049, sequence 64, 11:
5024

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN:

In my view, the initiative clearly supplements some of the initiatives already underway and would break some new ground in some respects.

In terms of supplementing the initiatives already underway, we already have a situation where we have started to address the issue of having the right people for the job in a number of areas which will invariably result in a higher quality of service being provided. I am speaking now about the work being done by the TVET Council. Many Honourable Members may not be aware but the TVET Council is already doing some serious work in this area. It is in the process of developing occupational standards for key sectors of the economy. Occupational standards are the benchmarks against which you would judge competence to determine if somebody should be certificated or not. These standards are being developed by bodies that comprise employers, trainers and employee's representatives.

There are three such bodies in existence that are evaluating occupational standards in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Jamaica with a view to distilling from those, occupational standards for Barbados in a number of areas. The three areas that are already under consideration are tourism and hospitality, information technology and, quite importantly, customer service. Occupational standards have already been validated for Barbados in eight areas. Four are under the tourism and hospitality sector, three are under the customer services sector and one is under the information technology sector.

Mr. Speaker, the TVET Council has gone further. They are now beginning to put things in place to be able to award national vocational qualifications based on the occupational standards that are set. These national vocational qualifications are going to be awarded based on the skills and understanding that people learn and acquire on the job as opposed to traditional qualifications where people get qualifications based on what they know and can reproduce in an exam. This would go a long way to ensure that there are no square pegs in round holes on jobs and will, in my view, clearly ensure that the quality of service that is delivered will increase and benefit the company, the employee, the consumer

and the country as a whole.

Certainly, the issue of establishing occupational standards and awarding national vocational qualifications particularly in the area of customer service should fit squarely within the parameters of this NISE initiative. Mr. Speaker, that programme by the TVET Council is but one programme. We have to do more and do it quickly so as to ensure that the services rendered to consumers are of a sufficiently high standard.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that the NISE Programme will benefit employers, employees, customers and the country on the whole. However, Mr. Speaker, my bias, and I make no bone about saying it, has always been in favour of the consumer. I have no regrets, Mr. Speaker, about bringing to this Parliament the two pieces of consumer protection legislation that I brought here, the Consumer Protection Act and the Consumer Guarantees Act, in 2002. I have no regrets about bringing here the legislation that established the Fair Trading Commission and the Utilities Regulations Act as well. The Fair Trading Commission has been doing a marvellous job and I commend them and urge them to stay on the track that they are currently on. I have no regrets, Mr. Speaker, about bringing here a legislation dealing with Fair Competition which was designed to deal a serious blow to the unfair trading practices that were found to exist in Barbados. In fact, I see that as the zenith of my political career.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at those pieces of legislation you would notice that the one common thread running through all of them is the issue of consumer protection. The consumer needs the most protection. We sometimes forget that we are all consumers. We are the ones who have always been at a disadvantage in the marketplace. Suppliers have always had superior bargaining power, but the consumers have had very little or no rights at all.

That change, Mr. Speaker, and the process of bringing about equality in the bargaining power between supplier and consumer was underwritten in 2002 with the establishment of the Fair Trading Commission. They established the passage of two revolutionary pieces of consumer protection, the establishment of the post of Public Counsel and a Consumer Claims Tribunal, all of which have been bringing about a long overdue balance between the rights of the various players in the marketplace.

Sir, this is necessary because there is no denying that the quality of service offered in Barbados is not of a sufficiently high standard. This manifests itself not only in the treatment we receive when we visit various establishments around Barbados including Government departments and agencies, but also when we seek to have work done by many providers of service in this country. The statistics will bear this out.

Mr. Speaker, to date some 35 cases have been lodged at the Consumer Claims Tribunal. A large number of those 35 cases were complaints relating to faulty repairs done to items delivered for repairs and a refusal by the service provider to even try to resolve the matter before it reaches the Tribunal. If you look at the figures in relation to Public Counsel, you would see even more startling figures. Mr. Speaker, for the last financial year, the Public Counsel received some 539 complaints. From the 1st of April this year to the end of November, some eight months, the Public Counsel received some 873 complaints, an average of 109 complaints per month. He has settled 803 of them.

Mr. Speaker, clearly the NISE initiative will deal with service delivery in a broader way and with the quality of services to be rendered in public places generally, separate and apart from situations where

there is a contractual relationship between the complainant and the service provider. As I understand, it will seek to eradicate things like bad and poor manners and the big and little things that generally tend to turn people off. Mr. Speaker, the National Industry of Services Excellence initiative is a very good programme and I want to join with the Prime Minister in urging all Barbadians to get on board. I note that the Prime Minister is chairing the initiative. It would obviously demand a lot of his time. I also see that considerable research has to be done. The one request I make is to ask the Prime Minister not to allow this project to become civil service driven or civil service led because once that happens, its rate of progress, chances are, will be considerably slowed. This is too important a project to be derailed. We do not need to have this project become bogged down in bureaucracy and red tape.

Mr. Speaker, I also note that consumer organisations are not specifically mentioned as one of the players in the project. I suppose it can be said that they would be included under the umbrella of civil society. I believe that consumer organisations have to play a role in the process of making customers and consumers aware of behaviours in the marketplace. Consumer organisations can let people know where there are low service standards and high service standards and therefore decisions can be made as to where customers should boycott because the service standards are too low. Mr. Speaker, when radical action is taken to show that we resent the type of low quality service we are receiving you would see how quickly those same offending establishments will raise the quality of their service to the benefit again of the customers across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support this initiative and will closely monitor its progress.

Mr. Speaker, I am in your hands, I realise that 25 minutes has gone, but if you would permit me...

Mr. SPEAKER:

Could you conclude in another two minutes then?

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN:

I want to turn now, Mr. Speaker, to some constituency matters particularly in relation to the area of natural gas. Mr. Speaker, I know that the current Chairman has been trying his best to ensure that we have a programme of expansion of natural gas across Barbados.

House 049 Sequence 65

12:00 noon

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Speaker, I want to see that happening in St. Michael North. I want to see mains being laid, stretching from the area of Grazettes, right up to Warrens, including Eden Lodge, Cave Hill, Husbands Heights, et cetera, for the installation of natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make reference to a case in particular, which I consider to be a very bad one. This relates to an area in Cave Hill, where the installation of natural gas mains was started before the 1999 election. Part of the area was fitted with the mains and so on, then shortly after the elections, work

stopped because the Ministry of Public Works and Transport was having financial problems.

Sir, that can happen to any institution but after the work recommenced, I believe that the most decent thing to have done, would have been to go back to those places where work was abruptly halted and to conclude those areas.

Sir, there was a very abrupt cutting off the project at St. Stephen's Hill, Cave Hill and on resumption, it still remains there as it was, past-performed.

Therefore, I know that the Chairman has urgent plans to get things up and going in the area of natural gas expansion but I am urging the Ministry of Public Works, to go back to that area, to go to Bonaire Lane and Phillips Road and to ensure that those persons who had a legitimate expectation that natural gas would have been installed in those area, would, in fact, receive such natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, one last area, if you would permit me.

Mr. SPEAKER:

I will allow you to do the last one.

Mr. R. St C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Speaker, I have glossed over the fact that repairs have not been taking place in St. Michael North as planned since Hurricane Ivan and I go quickly to the area of Warrens.

Mr. Speaker, Warrens is an area that I think has to be seen as a Town and has to be treated as such. Warrens has two major car dealerships, one major supermarket, a mall, a number of restaurants, one major fast food outlet, two commercial banks, two insurance companies, one major department store, one major members club, a large number of general stores, at least two warehouses and bonds, and soon there is going to be a major Government complex. There is also a health clinic.

Sir, up there we have an emerging town and, therefore, I think we have to ensure that some amenities are added to complete the process of making it a town. Sir, for example, we need a post office, a fire station, a police substation and possibly even a bus terminal because we are now dealing with an area where a large amount of commercial activities are now taking place and, therefore, it has to be adequately equipped.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the surrounding communities also have to be protected from this increase in traffic. Sir, the west road, a road that was never built to accommodate the kind of traffic that it is now being asked to accommodate. Therefore, we need to look very seriously at widening the west road and ensuring that the necessary infrastructure would be put in place, such as police security, to ensure the safety of that area. Sir, there are larger numbers of persons than before passing through the area and, therefore, some of them might be 'scoping' the area with a view perhaps to commit crime in the area. Therefore, these are issues that would have to be looked at carefully.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that my time has run out but I would conclude by wishing all Honourable Members the best for the season. I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North, usually an Honourable Member is allowed 30 minutes. We normally do not do this but I am appealing to your generosity. I am, therefore, asking you to conclude in 25 minutes, that is by 1230 p.m.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

I would first like to thank the good people of St. Philip North for giving me this opportunity and Barbados as a whole, for giving me the opportunity to make my presentation in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I sat and listened to the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, who said that he is proud of the performance of the Barbados Labour Party for its ten years. Sir, I sat and wondered whether the Honourable Member for Christ Church West was living in Barbados for those ten years, under the Barbados Labour Party, Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party was given a clear mandate on September 06, 1994, to govern this country. They have been in power for ten years and certainly in their 1994 Manifesto, they made certain utterances. They spoke about the betraying of trust and to the fact that no one would have been left behind.

Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself with certain statements that were made in the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto, 1999, as we examine the state of affairs at page 27 by the then Democratic Labour Party's Honourable Member for St. James South, who is now the Honourable Member for St. James Central for the Barbados Labour Party. It says:

"...It is time to stop giving benefits to the upper class, beachfront land to foreigners and handouts and patronage to conservative party friends. It is time to spread the economic gains to all, through the access to better paying jobs..."

Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself with those comments because they are still real and true today, when we examine the performance of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, I want to associate myself with the statement made Tuesday 11th, 2003, in this Honourable Chamber by the Honourable Member for St. George South, who said that for ten years, there was not one Government house or land lot that has been built in his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I am submitting that the Honourable Member for St. George South has also set the state of affairs which has happened within the last ten years. Therefore, we have the 1999 Manifesto setting out statements, elections after elections, with Manifestos after Manifestos, which classified and qualified the performance of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, they have come, with promises after promises to the people of Barbados, and not one promise by this Barbados Labour Party Government has been fulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit that this Barbados Labour Party Government, in their 1994 Manifesto, at page 4, went to the people and said should the Barbados Labour Party be elected to form a new Government of Barbados, they will table this Manifesto as a working policy document of the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party has made a number of promises and the fact that they have brought their Manifesto to the people, who have accepted it, has, in fact, made it a social contract with the people of Barbados. Sir, therefore, as I go through the promises that were made in their 1994 Manifesto, we must ask ourselves whether they have breached that social contract. Therefore, as I repeat the promises made to the people of Barbados, I challenge any Honourable Member to get up and tell me whether or not those promises were truly made or whether they were made to hoodwink the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party, comes here and talks about what happened in 1991 and in 1994. H:No.049(66)1210 p.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

Sir, in their Manifesto, they said they would abolish imprisonment for breach of maintenance order but it has not been done. They also said they would establish an independent Transport Authority, introduce a Business Society Act, construct new Transport Board headquarters at Kendall Hill and the enactment of integrity legislation but, Sir, none of these things were done. I could go through the list of promises and I challenge Honourable Member on the other side to get up and refute these things.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. May I point the Honourable Member and all other Honourable Members of this Chamber to the Barbados renewed document which speaks to commitments made in the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party and which were, in fact, fulfilled. It is a substantial document of 79 pages and still in fact did not contain all.

May I also remind Honourable Members in this Chamber that the Right Honourable Lloyd Erskine Sandiford had said that as far as the Democratic Labour Party was concerned, the Manifesto is not a social contract and the Democratic Labour Party has never in its history produced one of these but we have done so on more than one occasion but in particular on the last occasion to show the number of things that were in fact fulfilled. The Honourable Member was keen to join us before on the promises we fulfilled.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

Mr. Speaker, they said in their Manifesto that they would introduce a referendum and I want to ask the Honourable Member for St. James South if it was done. Sir, it was not done nor was a new set of general orders to govern the civil service done.

They said they would bring occupational health and safety legislation to this country, that was not done either. Sir, the Sexual Harassment Bill nor the National Minimum Wage Bill were not done either. I will deal with other promises because Honourable Members on the other side cannot answer these things.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say respectfully that when they spoke about trust, I am saying that the Barbados

Labour Party has betrayed the trust of the people of this country and, Sir, we classify their tenure as a decade of deception.

Sir, the slogan of the Barbados Labour Party was “No One Should be Left Behind”. When we examine the workers, nothing has been done for them in the past ten years. Sir, persons worked hard in this country, toiled day and night to get a salary but nothing has been done in terms of protection for their health and safety at work. I respectfully submit that they have betrayed their trust.

Mr. Speaker, after ten years of governance, the man, the woman of the poor working class and the low-income worker have been left behind. Sir, the low-income worker is still looking for a house to this day.

Sir, when we look at the industrial climate in this country, workers were promised legislation so that they could work safely in their environment. I submit that for this year alone we have had strikes in the Audit Department, Customs and Excise, the Public Market, the Meteorological Office, the National Petroleum Corporation, the Registration Department, the School Meals Department, Grantley Adams International Airport, the National Housing Corporation, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Sanitation, the National Assistance Board. Sir, all these workers are dissatisfied because this Government has not set an environment so that the working conditions of the workers can be improved and they can work in safety.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition made statements that the money of taxpayers is being wasted. I received a call from someone last week telling me to go to Silver Sands Beach to look at a beach facility in that area. I enquired what the problem was and was told that when I go to the beach facility to remember a particular calypso “Steel in There”.

Sir, I went to the beach and at the opening of the beach facility, the Minister responsible made certain statements at the opening of the beach facility in Silver Sands. The Minister wanted to know how the beach facility of 1 024 square feet could cost \$432 000. The Minister called on the agency not to waste the money of the taxpayers.

Sir, the beach facility consists of eight toilets, four baths, a lunch room for staff, a caretaker’s office and storeroom but cost \$432 000.

Mr. Speaker, when we speak about transparency and accountability, we must ask ourselves if the baths were made of gold. We are not saying the people of Silver Sands should be deprived of a beach facility but we want to know how come the facility cost \$432 000.

Mr. Speaker, do you know how many houses could have been built from the cost of that project? When I visited the facility, a young man told me that his house was damaged during storm Ivan but Government....

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House and by extension the country when he uses the expression “Steel in There” and speaks to a lack of transparency.

H49/12:

20 p.m.

Sequence 67

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, please.

..... Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

I wish to point out that as Minister I drew the attention of the public to the matter of the cost of the facility and indicated at the time that National Housing Corporation needs to do more effective project costing.

Sir, the fact that it was a beach facility, there were foundation challenges and the foundation alone was outsourced at \$72,000. It is not true to say that there are only 8 bathrooms because there are facilities for male and female toilets, facilities for the physically challenged, locker facilities, changing rooms, lunch room and storage room for the staff, bathrooms for the staff, a caretaker's office and a verandah. It is a much larger facility than the Honourable Member sought to give the impression for.

Sir, the challenge with the cost has to do with a problem that is a national one. It is a fact that throughout the government service there is such a high percentage of absenteeism that when the carpenters are at work the masons are not there. It is not a question of stealing but ensuring better project management.

Sir, to suggest to the country that there is a measure of corruption is totally improper.

Mr. SPEAKER:

You have made your point.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Thank you very much.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

Mr. Speaker, at the opening of the beach facility the Minister said that the project should not be costing \$432,000 and that was under her watch, Sir.

Sir, I want to refer to this myth on Constitution and Administrative Law. At Page 169 it states, " All Ministers whether they are in or outside of the Cabinet are responsible for the general conduct of their departments and ask them in their name and the department of officials..." That is a ministerial responsibility.

Sir, the fact of the Ministers' voluntary confession, no inducements or promises were held out but a voluntary confession of the wastage of taxpayers money, I am submitting that the Minister is responsible and therefore must carry the can.

Asides.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

I am going to move on from the bath because it seems to be a very sensitive topic for the Honourable Member for St. James South.

Sir, we want to know who ordered the materials? Something is very fishy. The wastage of the taxpayers money must stop. I also want to know what...

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

On a point of order. Sir, to ask who ordered the material and then say that there is something fishy is to impute improper motives and a high sense of impropriety. It is a project which was executed by the National Conservation Commission of Barbados under their aegis and the information was made public by the Minister in the presence of the Chairman and other officials of the National Conservation Commission at a public function. This is not any clandestine thing. This is not something that the Government is trying to conceal or misrepresent.

Sir, as Minister, when the figures came to me I said that this was an unacceptable cost for the facility and I made that public. This is nothing that the Government is trying to avoid nor wastage of taxpayers money or an absence of diligence. To suggest that there is something fishy is to say that there is deliberate wastage. There is not deliberate wastage. It is not prudent management in my view but to say that there is deliberate wastage and to suggest that there is something fishy is really very wrong.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Proceed, please.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

Sir, as part of the Opposition we want an inquiry carried out into this matter because justice must not only be done but it must be seen to be done. I asked about transparency and I speak about accountability.

Sir, the Minister must carry the can and she must carry the can for this.

Asides.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

Sir, people in this country need houses and some cannot get a spot of land.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, please.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

In July there was a freak storm in my constituency and two elder men, ages 83 and 93, who live at

Well House Corner, lost their home and they were promised by this Government that the house would be repaired in approximately 5 weeks. These elderly folk have made an outstanding contribution to this country and if this Government was committed to their 1994 Manifesto promises where they said that there will be a creation of a just and humane society in which we respect our women and take care of our elderly, where is the compassion and respect?

Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Philip North are crying out. If there is an ounce of compassion or some degree of mercy on this Government, then at least reach out to those two elderly gentlemen at Well House Corner, St. Philip. Six months have gone and nothing has been done. Sir, we want to know when will this house be repaired and when will these two gentlemen return to their home?

Once again, it only confirms the deception of this Government. I ask for social justice for these two elderly gentlemen.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

On a point of order. I hesitate to rise. The Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House and I am sorry to have to interrupt him even as he has found himself to be emancipated from his customary lethargy in this place.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Order.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

It is a matter of record before this Chamber that the Minister of Social Transformation, who perhaps, who is too much of a gentleman to rise in his own defence, rose in this Chamber a few months ago when similar charges were made and he accepted personal responsibility for handing out the offer to render assistance and explained into the records of this house that the difficulty was one of funding and that the very best will be done for the elderly people. He explained that it was a heartfelt and painful matter for him.

Sir, it is the height of impropriety now in the full glare of the television for the Honourable Member to treat and characterise as deception that which could not have been otherwise corrected in the space of a few weeks when the Member took responsibility and now. It is improper, Sir.

H49/ 12:

30 p.m.

Sequence 68

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 69, 12:

30 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The time is now 1230 p.m., could you possibly in another three minutes, conclude please.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on the issue of transportation. Only this morning when I came down, I saw some of my constituents and like any good representative, Sir, I collected them and took them to town. They complained about the bad bus service that is being meted out to the people of St. Philip. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South confirmed this and is in total agreement with me that it is bad. The only problem I have with the Honourable Member for St. Philip South is that he made an attempt to impose increased bus fares on the people of St. Philip and Barbados and, Sir, he was stopped.

I believe, Sir, that he was stopped in good time but the people in St. Philip are saying, especially the ones that travel on the Bayfield bus and the Route 12 bus to Sam Lords Castle, school children, workers and the elderly, that they have problems getting a bus. One lady told me that she was waiting in the Bus Stand for a Bayfield Bus from 2:00 p.m. and only got home about 700 p.m. It is bad and I would hope that there is an improved bus service for the people of St. Philip and Barbados as a whole.

In conclusion, I want to say that the decade of deception is fully concretized in their Manifesto and when we examined their performance, the fact that when workers in this country want their just due from the National Insurance Scheme, Sir, they have to wait for many months for it to materialise.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Honourable Member for St. George North to speak about the roads in St. Philip. The people are crying out for better roads. I have sent him letters and I hope that he acts upon them very swiftly.

Sir, the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North is a member of the Opposition, I believe that if he wants to create a just and humane society, he should spread some of the fruits into St. Philip North and let the people there enjoy a good standard of living.

Sir, I would also say that for ten years and two Ministers of Labour, not one piece of legislation was passed for the workers in this country. When we examine the Democratic Labour Party performance, in terms of legislation to protect workers, it is an outstanding record. The Democratic Labour Party passed the Severance Act and the National Insurance Scheme, to protect workers in this country.

Finally, Sir, my respectful submission is that the \$442 000 they spent on the bath, some of that money could have been used to repair those two elderly gentlemen houses from Well House.

Thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 115 p.m. today.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 1:15 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

House 049, sequence 69, 12:
3503

Thursday, December 09, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in this debate to make my contribution to what I consider to be a great presentation by the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this presentation and the measures that were outlined in it will help to carry Barbados well into the twenty-first century. In that presentation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were measures to stimulate agriculture and manufacturing and to help those agricultural farmers who had problems with the various floods and storms. I consider these measures to be very important to the way in which we deal with the manufacturing sector and the agricultural sector so that they may keep pace with what is happening in the tourism sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that Project Oasis is indeed a very viable project which would allow most communities across Barbados, especially those in the inner city, to benefit from the skills training programme that is now instituted by that Project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, pensioners across Barbados, especially non contributory pensioners, will benefit from an increase in pensions. Sir, even though the Opposition would want us to believe that it was a slight increase, it is an increase nonetheless that they will benefit from. One can ask oneself the question: What happened when the Democratic Labour Party formed the Government, the time in which they were not talking about increases? Surely, there were decreases in those times and people did not have confidence in the then administration.

That is a question that needs to be asked and answered because the Opposition would have us believe that we spent ten years wasting time, and they went around the country in the last couple of weeks talking about deception. The public of Barbados will have to be the judge of what happened in the last ten years of our administration. We want to pose the question: Are we better off today than we were in 1994? Do we have more confidence? What about the economy? Mr. Speaker, we also have to ask the question What are other people saying about us? What are some of the things other countries are saying

about us? What about the international agencies? We are not saying these things ourselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can ask a number of questions and we can point to show that we have a lot to talk about in this country. The Leader of the Opposition has asked the question: What do we have to show? Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a new airport, a new Hilton Hotel, better accommodation for our civil servants. We pay \$20 million in rent annually to improve the lot of our civil servants.

House 049 Sequence 70

1:10 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a better deal for civil servants. In 1994, the wage bill was \$401 million. Today it has increased by another \$200 million. It now stands at \$641.9 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are saying that there is a better deal for the civil servants. The Honourable Members of the Democratic Labour Party want to know what have we to show since 1994. I am sure that the Democratic Labour Party is aware of such things as the return of the 8 per cent cut and the security of tenure for casual workers. There was a time when casual workers could not have gotten mortgages because they had no security of tenure. Today since becoming public workers, a number of them have security of tenure. We have also improved the technology base for the civil servants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when looking at both the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission, what do we see? We see a number of things happening in rural development. When we came to office, the country was dark and dismal. There were a number of tenantry roads that were started by the other administration but work had been stopped. In 1999, the Rural Development Commission had installed 4,249 street lights. Sir, to date we have installed over 6,000 street lights in rural Barbados.

The Democratic Labour Party would ask what do we have to show. We have done tenantry roads all across Barbados. This is about uplifting the poor man. Sir, the poor must have some of the cake as well. We have repaired more than 389 homes by the Rural Development Commission. We have dug more than 461 wells for the poor. We have installed 98 water-borne facilities for persons. We have provided over 472 loans for persons who were either engaged in business activities or wanted to become engaged.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are satisfied that much has been done by both the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission, in terms of providing new homes, loans, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have asked us to show what the Right Honourable Prime Minister has achieved. Sir, in the Ministry of Housing, there are the London Bourne Towers. Do they walk around

this country? We have provided more house spots over the last ten years than ever before.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we came to office, persons were given mortgages between 9 per cent and 9.5 per cent. It was this Government that caused the interest rates to decrease by 3 per cent by setting the rate at 6 per cent. It was also agreed that, for the first time, persons will receive 100 per cent mortgages. Sir, these are some of the things that we have done, yet the Opposition wants to know what have we done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also amended the Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act, where persons are able to buy land at \$2.50 per square foot. Sir, I am sure that they know these things. We, on this side, will point these things out to Barbadians because as a former Prime Minister of Barbados said, Barbadians have short memories.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have not even spoken about what we have achieved in terms of structural improvement. Sir, \$60 million was spent on improving the Bridgetown By-pass Road and to improve that 7km of road. We have also done work from Welches to Salters to improve those roads. We have relocated homes from Orange Hill to Greenwich Village; from Sayers Court to Six Roads; and from Dash Valley to St. George Primary School. Sir, apparently the Honourable Member for St. Philip West does not go into St. Philip. Road works was done from the Crane to St. Martins. Work is still continuing to Rock Hall. Sir, that is a beautiful nylon road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, road works have also been done in Mile-and-a-Quarter and on the St. Lawrence Development. Sir, I am sure the Opposition Members are always in St. Lawrence Gap and can see the work that was done there. Sir, we are currently doing Green Hill and Martindales Road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that when one looks at the road infrastructure in this country, that over the last ten years, this Government has spent more than \$600 million. Sir, never before in the history of this country has this been done. That is why we were returned to office in 1999, in 2004, and I believe that the public, seeing what we have done, will return us whenever the next election is called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Other Side has asked us what have we done but has never suggested anything that they will do. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition got up yesterday and went through a number of things that he said we should not have done but he has not said what are some of the things that we could do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a programme to help alleviate the traffic problems in this country. It is true that we have a situation where we now have more than 106,000 vehicles on our roads, with only 18,000 kilometers of road. Sir, the road network has not increased significantly over the past ten years and even though we have done a lot of work, for example, improving junctions, we have not done much improvement in terms of increasing the length of these roads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am convinced that there are good and dedicated workers within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, who have carried out a number of studies to look at how we can manage traffic. Sir, I can speak to an officer who is a traffic engineer. Her name is Sharon Griffith. She has carried out a study on park-and-ride. That department has also looked at other studies such as how do we improve traffic management in this country.

Sir, recommendations were made to the Democratic Labour Party to improve the highway. Under the Democratic Labour Party, a study was also done in 1991 and in those years, it was recommended to put flyovers at the junction of Belle Road. It was recommended to make it into a four-lane highway. Sir, they have not done anything. We will do it because we saw the increase in the number of vehicles coming into this country. We saw the number of vehicles moving from 50,000 in the 1970s to 106,000 today in 2004.

H:No.049(71)120 p.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Sir, recommendations were made but they were not implemented. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that ABC Highway was first conceptualised to be a four-lane highway. When we left office in 1986, the lands were already acquired because they belong to Government. We have since then carried out studies and found out that it is necessary to improve some of the roundabouts. When we improve these roundabouts, we have to look at making the highways four lanes in certain areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a study was carried out which showed that 18 000 vehicles pass through Hinds Hill daily, 31 000 pass through Everton Weekes roundabout, 32 000 pass through the Belle Junction, 32 000 pass through Norman Niles roundabout, more than 30 000 vehicles pass by Bussa Emancipation statue daily and 40 786 pass the Sir Garfield Sobers statue and roundabout daily.

We recognise that something has to be done and that we cannot stand idly by and do nothing. We are not the Democratic Labour Party who did not respond to the study in 1991. Sir, I would not be presiding over a Ministry that does nothing.

We have invited persons to give us their concept of moving traffic through the roundabout faster and the concept of flyovers keep coming to mind. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is nothing new because they are used in North America and England. We also recognise that roundabouts are not everything that other things must be done. If we decide on flyovers, they would be made of steel structure or concrete but we must still determine the best structure for Barbados. Government has decided that the option of flyovers at roundabouts presented to it by engineers from Barbados and abroad would be the best option for Barbados at this point in time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not want to stop there. We are not saying that flyovers is the answer to move traffic into Bridgetown so we have looked at other measures and are introducing them to manage traffic in Barbados.

We have looked at the park-and-ride situation, a study was done by Miss Griffith and Miss Inniss and their department and they recommended that park-and-ride should happen at four locations outside of Bridgetown. These locations are the Garfield Sobers roundabout, the Warrens area, the Belle junction and the junction at the Flour Mill. Sir, we believe that park-and-ride would help in these areas.

Sir, park-and-ride means that there must be a dedicated transportation system which must be adequately funded and must provide prompt, reliable and efficient service. Sir, a number of persons want to come to the city on a daily basis and we believe that by parking at a cheap, safe, reliable location and travelling to the city would be the option for Barbados. Sir, when you come off the flyover the various locations, you can park your vehicle and move into a reliable transportation system.

The Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central asked what would be done about Carrington Village and the Collymore Rock areas as you approach the city. We have proposed that we would look at double lanes and synchronisation of the traffic light.

We believe the answer lies in stopping cars from entering the inner city. In fact, I believe that more than 3 000 vehicles park illegally in Bridgetown daily. I am not talking about those cars which park in car parks but we need to have more high-rise parking within central Bridgetown. Government is looking at moving this process forward with the help of the private sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am convinced that we are doing our best to improve the traffic management in this country. Also, in the next year, we will introduce a new plastic driver's licence to this country. Cabinet has already approved the introduction of the plastic drivers' licence and we are hopeful that by April/May 2005, it would be introduced to replace the book licence. Sir, the book licence was in place for many years but we would all agree that the book can become tattered and people do not like to carry them around. When the plastic licence is introduced, it would be equipped with a magnetic strip that can access all updated information at the License Authority. Of course, it will have a photograph of the person, the name, gender and date of birth. The most important thing is that the police will have access to the records stored on a data base at the Licensing Authority. We are hoping that we could have more control over the number of persons driving on our roads and that the records of the police would be updated and that the Minister of Public Works, at any one time, would be able to know the number of persons driving with licences and those who are driving without licence. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this means we would have to police these things from time to time. An amendment will come in the next year to make it compulsory that these cards be carried on persons at all times. We now live in an international world and when accidents occur on the road and drivers do not have their licence, a wrong name may be given to the police and we are introducing this measure to curb some of the problems which now occurred where cases go undetected.

H49/1:

30 p.m.

Sequence 72

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of ... Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

The Ministry is looking at how we can manage traffic and people must not believe that we are sitting idly by doing nothing.

Sir, we are actively looking at solutions. Sir, not only are we looking at the idea of fly-overs and

spending \$100 million as stated by the Opposition. Honourable Members must understand that we continue to spend over \$50 million on an annual basis on our capital programme and we are doing work all across Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have recently introduced a night programme and Honourable Members would have seen roads being repaved in Bridgetown, Warrens, Christ Church and St. Peter. This work is being carried out at night because we recognised that it is difficult for this work to be done during the day. We are also using a harder type of material out of St. Lucia and other Caribbean countries because our limestone is too soft.

Sir, we also recognised over the years that heavier vehicles are being imported and within two or three years the roundabouts are being destroyed. We realised that if we use sturdier material, this would help to extend the life of the roundabouts. This exercise is similar to the work done at Horse Hill, St. Joseph. In another few months we will be carrying out work at Rendezvous Hill and then will be looking at Highway 7. Sir, a lot of road work will be done in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry is committed to improving the roads to make them safer for Barbadians. We recognise that there is a loss of productivity time on the highways and, therefore we are not only looking at fly-overs but there is a comprehensive programme that Government has accepted and we are moving in stages.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister stated in his Budgetary presentation that \$50 million is being spent annually. We are trying to equip depots so that work can be carried out across Barbados.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member has one more minute.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

We are also looking at other programmes. Honourable Members asked about the drainage programmes. We have not had any major flooding in this country since 1970. We have had some localised flooding this year but the water quickly ran off. The reason why the water ran off quickly was because we set up the Drainage Unit in 1996 to help alleviate flooding in this country. For example, there was no flooding in Headley's Land this year and we will continue to look at depressed areas in Christ Church, Durants Village, St. James and the Speightstown areas. In addition to that, we will continue to improve the Gills Road area that was started a few years ago.

Sir, I give Honourable Members the assurance that the Ministry will continue to carry out work all across Barbados and try to make this country the best small country in the world. We are building more sidewalks and wider roads. We will also improve those roads where there are dangerous corners by cutting down the rock and widening those corners. The members of the public will judge us on what we have done. The people of St. George North have spoken and we will continue to improve the countryside for the people of Barbados.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Hon. C. Y. FORDE:

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this wonderful privilege. Since our last Budgetary debate we have lost a lot of great friends, some to illness and some to death. Therefore, I am really happy and thank the Almighty God for the privilege and, indeed, I want to extend sincere thanks to the people of St. Thomas for having continued to put their trust in me and I shall do the best I can under the circumstances. They can rest assured that the highest level of representation would be offered by me.

Sir, I want to say from the outset that I give my wholehearted support to the Economic and Financial Statement that was presented by our astute Leader, the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a young person, every year we anticipated when the Budget would be presented, every individual was anxious to hear what we were going to get or what measures would be put in place that would impact on our spending power, for example, whether biscuits, kerosine, passports, bus fare or road tax was going to be increased. I am happy to say that this is more than 10 years that road tax, passport, licences and other services of that nature have remained the same. I trust that they will remain for a very long time because we know that there are groups of people in our society who cannot afford any increase in taxes.

Sir, there is a saying that some policies and programmes deal with issues from the womb to the tomb, and I am not saying that in any derogatory way. I am referring to activity from birth until death. We know about the maternity benefits for persons who have babies and there are also benefits that are paid after a person dies through the National Insurance Department. There is a wide range of facilities that are being offered to the people of Barbados, the youth, the aged and the disabled.

Sir, I smiled yesterday as I listened to the presentation by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and I felt disappointed. Sir, when I look at the various benefits that will impact on the lives of Barbadians and I see the concentration of the Right Honourable Prime Minister in the expansion of programmes that will redound to benefit of all, I smiled sweetly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that the Honourable Member for St. Peter is spreading another thread in a web of destruction. He said that the Democratic Labour Party will restore Barbados from moral morass. I smiled to know that when the Honourable Member was a part of the Democratic Labour Party administration he sat in an office for two years and did nothing for the taxpayers' money. If that is not immorality I want somebody to tell me if it is not immoral to sit in an office for two years and do nothing for the taxpayers' money. It is a shame to go down that road.

The Honourable Member said that the Prime Minister in his presentation distorted the picture of the island's economy; camouflaged the state of accounting in new catch phrases and that he is a monumental failure as a manager. He then asked the question, what have we got in the 10 years that the Barbados Labour Party has been in office?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we got house repairs for senior citizens, the disabled, persons who are destitute or plagued with the HIV/AIDS virus. In most instances, new houses were built for these people.

49/ 1:50 p.m.

Sequence 73

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 74, 1:

50 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very grateful to the Rural Development Commission for the concrete and other roads that have been constructed, and the completion of the Exchange Road near Bibby Lane in St. Thomas, because those people wore two pairs of shoes and it was painful to see how they were suffering.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, small business enterprise has expanded. The Youth Affairs has offered services beyond my imagination, in some instances. Training and retraining of employees is another area that we have ventured upon. Enhanced working conditions, and we heard a lot about the Warrens project. As far as I am aware, no Minister deals with tendering for contracts. I know that whatever happens in the building circles, sometimes it has to do with a foundation which is too deep, sometimes while repairing an old building, it has to do with rafters, and the story is one that we can go over and over, but the new facilities at Warrens should help to ease some of the tension and make a better working environment for the workers of Barbados in the Government departments.

Indeed, the new building at Country Road for the Ministry of Housing has made a difference in the lives of those employees. We built schools, institutions, and upgraded the District Hospitals in most areas. Therefore, I have tremendous difficulty understanding what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West meant when he asked, what have you got for the ten years of service?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, knowing my interest in the number of other areas, I will not dwell on this except to say that the people of Barbados have listened and they will make the determination. Sir, if I were a young person preparing to vote in the next election, I would have already made up my mind, having compared the presentation from the Prime Minister and seen and enjoyed the services that have been offered to Barbadians, when I compare it to comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, but I am going to go on to deal with the area where I think I should spend most of my half of an hour.

I just want in passing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to speak about the national initiative of service excellence. Sir, when I was a little girl - again, I cannot leave out my past because that is what I am and has helped me to reach this stage - I always used to hear that the customer is always right, but I could not understand what it meant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now know that some aspects of what was being said, was important because the customer is key to the continued expansion, prosperity and the development of any business or any

organisation. Therefore, this national initiative of service excellence is pertinent to us, as we go into the global arena.

Sir, for many generations, we have been working as a service society. We train, retrain and offer services not only to Barbados but regionally and internationally and, if we are to continue to be relevant in this new global environment, then we must ensure that quality service is the hallmark of everything that we say or do. We must live it.

Sir, without getting any deeper into the discussion, I would wish to advise and encourage all Barbadians, children in the homes, children in the schools, persons in the churches, people on the street, and workers in various environs, to get on board to ensure that the service we offer to the people of Barbados and the visitors among us, is top quality. If people do not get good service, they get turned off and it creates all kinds of bad relationships. The benefits of such service will lead to enhanced quality products, better quality service, as I said, customer satisfaction, committed employees, lower prices, greater profitability, sustained jobs, better working conditions and overall development in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Barbados, I applaud all those stake holders, indeed, the tripartite approach that has been brought to the fore, every individual and organisation for their time and energies that have been spent over the last 18 months, in helping to pull this initiative together and to present it to the people of Barbados inviting them in the declaration, to come on board and be a part of this project. At the end of the day, we are all winners together, so there is a win-win solution at the end of the day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I going to my training to speak to the Universal Nursery Education Project that this Government has sought to fund this year, to the tune of \$1.5 million in the first phase. Indeed, over the next two years to another amount, near to that sum.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is this Government's desire to ensure that the public sector offers service. It is its desire to build human capital to ensure that Barbadians are on the cutting edge in every sphere of life. Therefore, we have to start with the very young children to prepare them for access to quality education, opportunities for social, cultural and other forms of development that make them the well-rounded citizens.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy for this initiative to further enhance what is being done at the early childhood level. We know that early childhood is perceived from age zero to eight years old, but already we have compulsory education from five until sixteen and, therefore, the emphasis at this time is on the three to five year olds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a teacher at the kindergarten level for more than two decades, I can tell you that those children who enter school that are already socialised in the school environment, being able to recognise letters, to speak and communicate with others, have a better advantage over those who remain at home. We cannot be condemning parents who go out there striving to get an opportunity for a job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must tell you that there are women, many of them single, who would be elated to get employment but because they have small nursery children, they have to remain at home with them, because they cannot afford the cost for nursery education. Some parents do not have anybody to

look after the children in the form of an adult because, sad to say, we have lost a lot of our community life, where people kept children and gave them quality care in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to dwell on the past, except to say that in the past children remained at home to look after siblings. Some parents still keep children home for two days a week to look after the little children, so that they can go out to fend for themselves and the family. Sir, this initiative of the universal nursery education, will help to eliminate some of those challenges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some nursery schools are extremely expensive and, therefore, persons who are working for small wages weekly, cannot afford to pay for those children. The Government nursery schools, namely, Government Hill, Erdiston, St. Stephens and Eden Lodge, can only cater to so many children, but I must tell you that the quality is top class in those nursery schools. This is not to say that the quality in some of the private nursery schools is not top class. I would never say that because I know a thousand times better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those primary schools on the island that have capacity for nursery education, have already been adjusted to facilitate the three to five year olds. Again, they are up to capacity now and therefore, the 1 600 odd children in Barbados who should really access nursery education but cannot, are the one that we are incorporating in this project.

House 049, sequence 74, 14:
0019

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE:

I am happy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have learnt that Government has included a grant for those private nursery schools so that they can be properly equipped because there is absolutely no point in putting three to five year olds in an environment where there is no stimulation, activities or equipment to help to prepare them for the primary stage or for life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that Grant's Preparatory School in Melrose, St. Thomas and Millington's Nursery School in Arthur Seat, St. Thomas are going to be happy managers of those schools today because of the opportunity that would be offered to them through a grant to enable them to furnish the schools with games and equipment to help those little children develop into good citizens. I laud those efforts, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to remind the public of Barbados that in the north and south of Barbados, particularly in the south of the island, there is a great need for facilities to be made available to satisfy this particular need. During the summer and when we are on vacation those businesses are flat, but they have their utilities bills to pay and they have to equip the environs, so those periods are extremely difficult for them.

This is a saving grace, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for our young children. I believe that if more of our children got the exposure from nursery level to attend school and to do meaningful activities, it will help to prepare them to go on right through life being interested, having been adequately taken of

educationally.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the future of our children is paramount to us in this Government. We will spend the taxpayers' money, that \$1.5 million, to help upgrade the facilities and to carry out whatever rehabilitation works should be done at the old St. Boniface School.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to move to another area that is dear to my heart. I often say that I may be looking old but I am really very young at heart. Therefore, there is no small wonder why young children gravitate towards me wherever I go, particularly young men, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I love them.

Asides.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can handle them because I will teach them moral guidance. I will tell them about our culture. I will teach them about the bible of which I have qualification as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central has indicated. That has blessed my heart. Everybody in the Caribbean knows Cynthia Forde has a spiritual base. I thank God for all those who have impacted on my life and I shall continue to work in that vein, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the late 1980s and the very early 1990s some of our youth started to drift. The things they were doing were not the normal things that we expected and therefore many individuals in the society started to speak out about it. At that time the Democratic Labour Party administration was cautioned about the upsurge in the drift of these children and what was considered then to be gangs. The then Justice Minister said that there were no gangs, only young people on a frolic. Now, our young people have been on a frolic for more than 15 years.

Yes, sometimes old people would drift. We have experienced individuals in their 30s and 40s who drift too and then somebody has to hold and firm them up and bring them back on stream because that is the acceptable thing to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have lived to see the gangs develop into what we now called the 'block' culture. I would wish for Honourable Members and indeed the public of Barbados to be aware that the block members do not only comprise working-class people children, they range at all levels. Therefore, I would wish to caution Honourable Members in this House not to move around thinking that every young man or young woman 'on the block' is illiterate. Some of them might be late developers. I would hazard a guess that at least 55 per cent of those who are 'on the block' are very well educated.

However, for one reason or another they are saying to us that the system has failed them, whether it be the school system, the community or the society in which they live, the church or even their parents. There are some parents who are insistent that if they are teachers, their children should be teachers too, or if they are doctors, their children should be doctors too, or if they are engineers their children should be engineers too, when they know full well that the children can be nurses, police officers, masons or contractors and they can be very successful at it. So this causes fracture in the family relationship.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every Honourable Member in this Honourable Chamber from all 30 constituencies has got a set of individuals who are 'on the block'. I want to laud the Barbados Labour

Party for having expanded the Youth Affairs Department and for hiring those 32 youth commissioners who go into what we call in Barbados, the nooks and the crannies, interviewing the youth, both girls and boys young men and young women, it is not only men.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have three dynamic new commissioners. Sir, if you would give me permission I would wish to call their names because I believe that the public of Barbados will continue to bombard them for information and to get admission to these very attractive programmes that have been so well-subscribed by the young people of Barbados. They are Mr. Shawn Burke, Mr. Marcus Stephen and Mr. Charles Griffith.

Those three young men, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have not only started to work since Project Oasis came to reality, they were working as the Block Committee in the byways and the hedges over the last three to four years with the young people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you do not have to have a degree in social work to be able to interface with the youth or to go 'on the block' to make a difference. That has to come out of the psyche of Barbadians. As long as you have the interest, the tenacity, the commitment and the love for young people, you can move them from 'the block'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to report today that the block committee through Project Oasis has been to more than 60 blocks across the length and breadth of Barbados. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have to call four of mine, I cannot call all. They have been in Bridgefield, Allen View, Spring Farm and Jackson. That is where the future of Barbados is. Our young men and women who for whatever reason became frustrated and removed themselves from normal living in the way that most of us know are what we consider to be unstructured youth, but they can be very productive as long as you engage them in a meaningful way and let them understand that you respect them and appreciate them for who they are, but that you want them to become a little more structured so that they could do even better. That is what the block committee through Project Oasis will continue to do with the \$2 million that has been allocated to them this year in this particular set of policies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can speak of Chalky Mount in St. Andrew where the youth in that area have embarked upon a tourism project. They have started to develop a nature trail that will take them all the way to the East Coast and other communities for tourists and locals alike to be able to enjoy the beauty of the east of Barbados. They have already started to do leather craft. They are some of the ones, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who are also engaged in the land for the landless programme.

I have seen them perform, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have seen them with the Youth Achieving Results Programme. Through this programme children who did not even remember that they knew how to hold a brush became some of the best artists that you can imagine when they put their work on display.

House 049 Sequence 75

2:10 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of those children are into drama, voice training and music and I think that is the route in which they need to go. If they have the innate abilities, we need to help them to develop those abilities, if the institutions that they had attended had not properly tapped into those areas.

Sir, persons from Crab Hill, St. Lucy, are the beneficiaries of some of those programmes offered by the Block Committee or the Project Oasis programme. The young man from Spooners Hill, who has his kiosk, has been given assistance with his vegetables and fruits that he has on sale. The group in Fernihurst, those three young men who only recently were able to go back home to their parents, who were accused of being involved in a murder case, have already been in discussion with the Youth Commissioners and have already started conceptualising a project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, most times some Barbadians like to stigmatise others. Therefore, whenever one goes to Glendairy Prison, to the Government Industrial School or commits some kind of infraction, Barbadians will hold it with that person for ever. These three young men needed help. The young boys and girls from the Government Industrial Schools need help and the Block Committee has been there and has already started its work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Richard Carter, Director of the Youth Affairs Department, has been working at Glendairy Prison for the last number of years, in helping those inmates to further their studies with the Caribbean Examination Council an aspect of a Degree for the University of the West Indies. He is also doing sociology with them. In addition, those young men from the community of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, that community near the Roxy Supermarket, are also on board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot help but speak to this one, the digital media project. Those young men who have attended the first module are making a demand to be in an advanced programme and they have not stopped there. They walked into my office one day with a CD and told me that I needed to see it. They said they were so motivated, that they were ready to go. I then called the Director at the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, who agreed to see them immediately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I speak to you, those young men have formed a company and have earned a contract, where they are doing a jingle which cost \$11,000 up front. They have gone down to the Islands and have started to do their own thing with the digital divide. There are others who are into computer technology and landscaping, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so overwhelmed that I cannot mention all of the areas in which those young people are involved but I think it is most significant that while they are doing all this training in tractor works, et cetera, these young people have a component of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse incorporated into the programme. Therefore, there are modules of healthy lifestyles incorporated into these programmes. Sir, we need to do that at every phase of training or exposure.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member, you have forty seconds.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to wrap up by lauding the plan to offer funding and to expand the

subvention for the Challenor School. I had the privilege to visit that institution earlier this year and it is phenomenal that when physically-challenged children have reached the age of 18, they go home and dolt. I am happy for the integration of the disabled into this society and, therefore, the Challenor School has got programmes in Agriculture, Arts and Craft, et cetera, for these individuals. This funding will help to go a long way in channeling most of our disabled children into the institutions across Barbados to help empower them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the students at the Irvin Wilson School have been able to source funding through the Tourism Committee, to start a laundry project where they will contract with hotels to clean their linen, so that these students can earn some kind of funding and to be able to get into the employment sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with great honour that I will wrap up my submission. I will, I am sure, get the opportunity again to be able to speak to the other initiatives that I am so happy about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to be a Barbadian today and I know that people in other parts of the region and, indeed, the world, are looking on at Barbados and wondering how have we gotten all these wonderful things happening in our country, where, on the other hand, there are persons who should know better but are only grumbling or only speaking for speaking sake.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that no one can do everything but that every one can do something and this is specifically to the disabled among us, whom I love, respect, and believe that the rest of Barbados will come on board and would give them opportunities for employment and recognition.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is, indeed, a pleasure to participate in my second debate on the Economic and Financial Policies. Sir, let me state from the outset that I am an Opposition politician. I am here to defend the interest of the people of St. Philip West primarily. I am also here to defend the interest of the people of this country when I believe it is necessary to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is my mandate, therefore, I am not charged to accept everything that is said in this Honourable House, neither am I charged to accept everything that is said by the Honourable Prime Minister or by anybody else on the Other Side. Sir, I am charged to do an analysis and to deliver that analysis as is seen by my comrades on this side and me, to this Honourable Chamber and to the people of this country. Sir, that is what I intend to do this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that the shadows are lengthening on his political career but it appears to me that those shadows are so long, that they are interfering with his capacity to make sensible economic decisions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Budget is close to the worst Budget that I have ever heard being delivered in this Honourable House because it bore no relationship at all to any national development plan that I have ever seen. It bore no relationship to the Estimates debates that were discussed in this Honourable Chamber. It addresses none of the pressing economic problems being faced by this country. It has

done nothing to enhance the lives of middle income and low income groups in Barbados, who struggle every day to pay electricity and water bills, buy food, send their children to school, pay their mortgages and pay for their cars. It has done nothing for them. It has done nothing to address the crisis in the health care sector. It has done nothing to address the crisis in the Barbados Water Authority. It has done nothing to address the crisis in Transport and in Housing.

Sir, the feeble attempts and promises to address the congestion on roads, after being in power for ten years, is reminiscent of similar promises made in their 1994 Manifesto. They were supposed to build a highway from Pico Tenerife to the Crane, along the Ermy Bourne Highway, northward to Pico Tenerife, and eastward to St. John, then to St. Philip. They were supposed to have built a four-lane highway from the University Roundabout to the Grantley Adams International Airport. They were also supposed to introduce the so-called overpasses on the ABC Highway from the Belle/Lears junction. Sir, this is just another promise. They have never fulfilled any of these promises, so why should I have to listen to them now?

Asides.

H:No.049(76)220 p.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

There is a lot of nothing in the Budget. There are a lot of platitudes and no real understanding by this administration as to how to stymie the rapid and continuous slide of almost \$300 million in the foreign reserves in Barbados within the last six to eight months. There is no understanding of how to enhance the foreign exchange earning capacity of a small open economy that is struggling with a national debt that was created by this Government.

Sir, there is no understanding of how to deal with the economics required in a small open economy to control the whopping growth of our trade deficit of over close to \$1 billion in ten years under the watch of the great economist from St. Peter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am concerned because this Budget should have addressed the national debt of this country. Sir, it should have addressed the fiscal deficit of the country and the comatose international business sector as is said in the reports of the Central Bank of Barbados. It should have found a way to improve the earning capacity in the tourism sector but, on the other hand, it has left the 7.5 per cent VAT on room and allows the tourism sector to struggle with all of the cost inputs of 15 per cent VAT upon all of its services like transportation, food and utility which all impact on the earnings of the sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter should have found a way to make sure that the head tax being charged at the port was funneled into tourism because this tax is a charge on cruise ships which is part of the tourism industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Budget has done nothing to provide for an environment that would allow for redevelopment of the export agricultural sector in Barbados. I never thought I would live to see the day

when the Barbados Labour Party administration would speak to import substitution in Barbados when they provided more than ten years of systematic decline of the manufacturing sector evidenced by the precipitous decline in its contribution to GDP.

Sir, the same is also true for sugar and non sugar agriculture and now I hear about import substitution. Sir, it cannot happen in the face of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy when we are faced with significantly cheaper products from within the region and outside the region under the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Sir, the Government is in some form of dream state because it cannot happen. Sir, I will not be hoodwinked by all this camouflage and rhetoric.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is nothing in the Budget that addresses the critical problems as identified in the manufacturing sector, specifically sugar and non-sugar agriculture. Sir, sugar and non-sugar agriculture suffer from fragmentation, under-capitalisation, poor input of technology, poor coordination of production and poor coordination of marketing. Sir, they should never have closed the ADC and BMC because one was supposed to market agricultural produce and the other agency was responsible for research and development with respect to the product of non-sugar agriculture and livestock production in Barbados but, lo and behold, somebody was smart and we are now suffering because we are seeing the decline in sugar and non-sugar agriculture in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to try and educate some of the Honourable Members on the other side. I believe it is necessary to remind the people of Barbados because part of the learning process is recency and frequency. Sir, you must repeat it all the time and I intend to do so.

Sir, it is not by accident or divine intervention that we now have the type of pragmatic mismanagement of the economy of Barbados because it is essentially a revisiting of the failed strategy of the Tom Adams' era of the 1976 to 1986 period and I will demonstrate this.

We have the same reckless, fiscal measures, the same high national debt, the same high trade deficit and a balance of payments crisis to the extent that we were in the hands of the IMF by 1982 and this cannot be refuted. When the Democratic Labour Party came into office in 1987, we had to deal with the staggering debt and fiscal deficit.

The records would show that by the time recession started in 1989/1990, that the foreign exchange earning position in Barbados was already on the decline. Sir, this is stated in the reports of the World Bank and the reports of the IMF. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party cannot be blamed for this because the Barbados Labour Party is doing the same thing they did in 1976 to 1986.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this administration has put this country in a debt trap, a stranglehold of debt but it is nothing new because this is exactly what happened in 1976 to 1986. Sir, in 1976 when the Democratic Labour Party left office, we had a national debt of only \$258 million. The domestic component of that debt was 80.6 per cent and the foreign debt component was 19.4 per cent. Sir, by 1986 when the Barbados Labour Party lost power, they had pushed the debt from \$258 million to 1.2 billion, an increase of \$942 million in ten years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, does that sound familiar to you? Sir, in addition the foreign component of the debt under the Democratic Labour Party was 19.4 per cent but they increased it to 50 per cent.

I want now to speak to the 1994/2000 period, show the similarities and show them by contrasting. Sir, in 1994 when the Barbados Labour Party took over office the national debt was \$2.1 billion but by 2004 the debt was increased \$4.38 billion, an increase of \$2 billion in ten years. Sir, the great guru from St. Peter had borrowed twice as much money as Tom Adams borrowed in 1976. Let us also look at the foreign component of the debt and make the comparison. In 1994, when the Democratic Labour Party left office the foreign component of the debt was \$640 million and according to the Estimates of 2004/2005, the foreign component of the debt....

Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House and by extension the country of Barbados. When he looks at the total national debt in 1994, as he said it was \$2.1 billion but you cannot look at it by itself.

H49/2:

30 p.m.

Sequence 77

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

You also have to look at the reserves. The reserves at that time stood at \$246 million, which is a tenth of what the debt was at that time under the Democratic Labour Party administration. Sir, the present position of a \$4 billion debt must be taken in the context of reserves of \$2.1 billion.

Sir, the Honourable Member tried to give a position that this Government has put the country in some dire position when in actual fact the reserves are only half the national debt as opposed to the time under the Democratic Labour Party when the reserves were one-tenth of the national debt.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Proceed.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member should learn to read mathematics. It is a language. The Barbados Labour Party introduced the concept of a second tier set of reserves and if the Democratic Labour Party had utilised the same principles applied then, we would have had over \$430 million in reserves and not even including those in the second tier. You have to learn to speak about things that you know about.

Sir, I will go back to the point because I know what they are trying to do. The fact of the matter is, if one looks at 2004/2005 Estimates, it would show that the foreign component of the debt is now two billion nine hundred and twenty-four million dollars of which two billion seven hundred and ninety-four million dollars are still outstanding. That is a debt trap.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is amazing that during the same period of 1994 to 2000 this administration also increased the domestic component of the debt. They increased it from one billion six hundred million

dollars to two billion six hundred and five million dollars and recently we debated an increase in the capacity to borrow on the domestic market by nine hundred and fifty million dollars.

Sir, let me explain the importance of information. In 1992/1993 the external debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio was 29.3 per cent and we were in a crisis. Do you know what the Gross Domestic Product debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio today is? It is 29.1 per cent but they would want to tell you that it is not a crisis now but it was a crisis in 1992/1993. It is the same 29 per cent but it was a crisis in 1991/1992 but it is not a crisis now because you have a great economist at the helm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debt trap is linked to the fiscal deficit and the fact that the foreign exchange consuming sectors in Barbados grew at a much faster rate than the foreign exchange earners sectors in Barbados. That is why the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West was saying to restructure the economy.

The Democratic Labour Party had cautioned this Government over and over that in a small open economy you cannot have a country's economic growth being led by the non trading sector, foreign consuming sectors, and allowing your trading sector to lag behind. We are now paying the price for it and I will prove it a little bit later.

Sir, to prove my point, I refer to the Article IV Consultation 2002 where it was evident that by 2001, because of the debt and the deficit, we had a foreign exchange crisis in Barbados and if this administration did not borrow \$150 million to cover that external current account deficit, we would have had a crisis in Barbados.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this administration made things worse because in addition to creating the debt trap, they created a deficit crisis at the same time over the same time period. Sir, at a time when the foreign reserves were under pressure, evidenced by the fact that they had to borrow to prop it up, do you know that the Prime Minister thought that it was wise to increase the aggregate demand by allowing people to spend more money to import more goods? Sir, that only reduced your foreign exchange capacity and put more pressure on the reserves. That is why we had a significant decrease in our reserves and it continues to slide daily.

Sir, they do not understand economics. I have to get a little cantankerous like the Honourable Member for St. James South because this is a serious matter. This is about the future of this country. This administration is mortgaging the future of Barbados and they must stop it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard ad nauseam in here talk about a counter cyclical fiscal programme. Some of them could not even pronounce the word or spell it. This policy is not a bad one. However, if the policy becomes counter productive because Government uses the revenue to engage in indiscriminate spending and engage in spending that would not uplift the social services of Barbados, then we have a problem on our hands and that is exactly what the data shows. The data shows that between 1999 and 2003 there were political business cycles in Barbados. What does that mean, Sir? It means that capital works went down to haywire right before elections and the evidence is there. It had

nothing to do with a national development programme and these are the facts.

Sir, more significantly, the Honourable Member for St. Peter made matters worse because in 1994 he said that the development of Barbados was going to be private sector led and the employment in the public service, after the restructuring programme was 21 per cent of the employment labour force. The Honourable Member has increased it to about 30 per cent today without understanding the implications of recurring expenditure. To make things worse he established the Urban Development Commission, Rural Development Commission and all sorts of Cs to spend taxpayers' money without understanding that it has recurring expenditure and as a result pushed the deficit to an uncontrolled position.

Sir, when the Honourable Member found out that he was trapped, I hope to God that what I am going to say is not a deliberate attempt for the Honourable Member for St. Peter to mislead the people in Barbados into a false sense of security, because when he found out that the deficit was in crisis, he came to the Honourable Chamber and said that the deficit is 5.6 per cent, is unsustainable and it must be reduced.

Sir, after that, the Honourable Member proceeded to exercise our budget to hide the financing because it would not be found in central expenditure. There can be no other explanation.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

On a point of order. I cannot sit here and allow the Honourable Member to impute improper motives on this Government. Sir, for him to suggest that this Government would hide expenditure is certainly imputing improper motives and I would ask that it be struck from the records.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Proceed.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is to reduce my time but I will speak. The International Monetary Fund is an international agency that means Barbados no harm.

49/2:40 p.m.

Sequence 78

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 79, 2:

40 p.m.

Continuation of Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

When the IMF conducts its Article IV consultation, the IMF officials go around to every department in Barbados. Am I to assume that they are given false information? If they are not given false information, I would want the Honourable Member for St. Peter and the Honourable Member for Christ

Church West to tell the Honourable House and the people in Barbados why the IMF could come up with a deficit to GDP 9.2 per cent and the Prime Minister said it is 5.6 per cent. Explain that one, Sir, because somebody has to be not telling the truth.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

This is not imputing any motives, Sir, I know section 28, rule 7.

Do you know what is important? After the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter pushed the national debt to \$4.3 billion, he woke up one morning and came to the Honourable House and said that, oh Lord, the debt is too high.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. Speaker.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK:

He then proceeded to say that he wanted to reduce it from 72 per cent of GDP to 60 per cent. They then came to the House of Assembly a couple of week after and increased the Local Loans Act to give them the capacity to borrow additional money.

Sir, unless I am suffering from some form of altered psyche then, it means that the Honourable Member for St. Peter has to explain these things not only to me but to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me make two quick points. I read the Budget Document 2004 to 2005 and from page 4 to 16, it attempted to tell Barbadians that he expects the fiscal deficit to be reduced to 2.6 per cent of GDP by 2005.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go very slowly here. If the deficit was 9.2 per cent in 2003/2004, as established by the IMF and Standard and Poor's and this administration is spending \$162 million more than it is collecting in 2004/2005, tell me how they are going to reduce the deficit. I have looked at revenues, and the revenues have not increased appreciably. These are the facts, come and defend them.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Proceed. You have another minute.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

I will wind up.

The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter obviously did not learn from the mistakes made by the late Rt. Honourable John G. M. G. "Tom" Adams from 1976 to 1986. The Honourable Member made the exact mistake, as is evidenced now, that is, he inherited a restructured economy in 1994 and a growth path of 4 per cent, a fiscal deficit of 2.3 per cent, \$400 million in reserves and a newly found second tier

reserve.

Sir, the Honourable Member wiped out the surplus that we had, created a deficit of 9 per cent of over \$281 million, increased the national debt to \$4.2 billion, and pushed employment in the public sector to 30 per cent of the employed labour force. Now, we have a crisis in the debt of Barbados and in the fiscal position in Barbados. Now, we have a crisis in terms of the trade deficit where the Prime Minister now knows that we are importing too much.

Sir, he has worsened the trade deficit by \$900 million in nine years. How can he explain that and now we are being told that we import too much? Under whose watch? Whose handwriting is on the wall, not the Democratic Labour Party, but the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Prime Minister has mortgaged the future of this country, and I believe he has breached the trust. I want him to come here and repent and ask the people of Barbados for forgiveness and I want them to tell him, no.

I think you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for allowing me to intervene and bring back some lucidity to the corridors. People speak about psychic alternations, I witness psychic inversions, demonstrating themselves where men, rather than speaking from what is coming from their heads, walk on their heads.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

The truth is that in the national politics, especially in the partisan arena, the ability to speak with profound commitment and to make an honest analysis devoid of any partisan influences are always suppressed by a strange two party culture. One which occurs when you are in Opposition and one which occurs when you are on the Government side.

House 049, sequence 79, 14:

5014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

When you are in Opposition, you want to perpetuate the unfortunate mythology that you are overnight endowed with all the graces of wisdom, and you would have done it better than the Government. Men who are not economists believe that in order for them to inch themselves on the national landscape of this political arena, they must enter the dramaturgical atmosphere of exhibiting all the theatrics that are required.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

The Honourable Member who just spoke is one of my best friends in here, Sir, but I just want to bring some clarity and some lucidity to the unfortunate situation.

Sir, we are forced to perpetuate this mythology. Although they are no better, in order to let this culture ride on the psyche of masses they want to make people believe on both sides that there is some commonality on Party positions and we do it sometimes to the detriment of the advancement of the nation. Most of us lament every day, it is like a human weakness. Sometimes we see things in politics on our side and we hear things that we do not like but then we are forced by some external intangible or spiritual force to give the impression that everybody is speaking in unison on these subject matters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to move this peripheral post-colonial state forward, we must attempt to bring some honesty to analysis of political issues and economic issues. I guess it is unfortunate sometimes because the culture of leadership is offended if a member of one side holds a different view and rather than respecting the objectivity with an effort to contribute to something that is developmental, there is a culture that signals to the society that there is a fundamental dispute that is responsible for some divide between the leadership and the member, and we have to be struggling with that.

Sir, I want to be charitable, I want to say that I have respected the perspective of the leader of this Party. I do not always agree with everything and I certainly do not agree with the long period of time in our history that we have fought to get where we are. I do not like this gradualist approach to economic transformation and cultural transformation and the slow burdensome approach to changes. In many cases when we make one step forward, we are forced to make two backwards.

Sometimes these views are subject to strong counter attacks not only within the corridors of Parliament or within the ambit of our nation, but in the Barbadian diaspora. You have an Afro-Saxon core that emerged in the form of a black elite who called themselves governors of institutions, governors of banks, managers and economists that do more harm to this society than good. Although everything that they are saying moves contrary to the feelings of the very people from which they sprung, they will continue to enunciate distortions and try to give the impression to the society that a large percentage of the people in this system are not marginalised from the mainstream of this economy.

Sir, I am not going to boast about the 2.9 per cent growth in the last nine months or a target of a three per cent growth. I am not going to mislead the people about any per capital income or balance of payments and whether there is a model in which there must be an equilibrium that what we export, the foreign earners, must be equivalent to what we import because no economy in these small ex-colonial states has shown any developmental progress as a consequence of that approach. We have always dealt

with deficit financing. It is just like a man who is working for a meagre salary who if he wants a car or a fridge he has to borrow because he is a low income earner and can never accumulate \$10 000 or \$20 000. So he borrows the money and pays it back on a long term basis. Sometimes it keeps him in a perpetual state of poverty. The cycle recurs because as soon as he pays it off, after a five-year period, the item has depreciated to such a level that he has to go again and borrow another \$10 000 or \$15 000. Those are the realities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all due respect to the economist who has to pontificate that this is some exact science, we are misled by the view that if you cite the per capita income that is a clear demonstration of the success of the quality of life of the people. It speaks nothing to distribution or equity across a system like this. Eighteen and twenty years ago people were saying it was not the right indicator to use and that we were being disqualified from international finance by using that model or that indicator. At one time we saw a report saying that US\$5 503 is the average. Recently, I saw a report saying that it is US\$15 000.

The South African Government was talking about averages and per capita income and millions of people never saw a penny and they had no food to eat. Is it not also wise to wonder if that traditional corporate class is controlling such a large percentage of the wealth in the country and that there is such a wide divide between that traditional business class and the poor, that the per capita income which is a hypothetical thing does not reflect reality. It is not fair to conclude that is misleading as an indicator for analysis?

Sir, when you wake up years after Independence in this country and decades after black self-government and read the Stock Exchanges reports, you would see the millions of dollars that five of the leading companies are making in profit. They give you half yearly reports and say five successful years, but they are not only five. If you check, they just go back to five, but there have always been successful years of economic growth and the accumulation of wealth for these people. However, these wage labourers and people who are receiving salaries are equating themselves with people who are calculating how much net profit they make at the end of a year out of business.

House 049 Sequence 80

3:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is where the inversion comes. How can we be serious when we cannot talk about the accumulation of wealth and if one were to withdraw the accumulation of wealth of that traditional sector from the wage earners in the society, that indicator about per capita income would be so inestimable, that it would be non-existent. Sir, suddenly this per capita income about great economic growth in the society is being tossed about. Sir, growth has nothing to do with development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Inter-American Development Bank's report still says to us, that since 1996, 35,000 individuals totally 7,000 households live below the poverty line. Sir, when they asked how did we arrive at this poverty line or at this point of subsistence, some joker who believed that it was

important to accumulate the average cost of a food basket and a few non-food items, gave us a western colonial model for us to believe that should determine the margin of subsistence. Therefore, we then toss this language about all across the world, about defending black people who are low wage earners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there are 35,000 persons below the poverty line, the question must be asked, how much are above the line itself. Sir, it is the Afro-Saxons, the strange breed, the breed who exploit free secondary and tertiary education. Some of them cannot stand the socio and economic pressures of the Caribbean and so they escape into North America and speaking through journalists, talk about how great Barbados is and about how patriotic are they but they do not want to live here but would instead only pass through as tourists would.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have these strange persons in this society who have access to the news media, who when they are talking superficial ignorance, can always find a front page for it. All they do is to walk about and talk nonsense, trying to make persons believe that the Caribbean is a paradise.

Sir, I am committed to examine reality and if Barbados was fortunate enough to reduce poverty even below the levels of all the other Caribbean countries, any man with a commitment and with a mission would know that you still cannot sustain it. One still cannot be happy about it, if there are brothers and sisters throughout the Caribbean who are also poor. One cannot be happy about it if the first black state in the region that was liberated had a 60 per cent of its population living below the poverty line. If there are other Caribbean neighbours with 40 per cent below the poverty line, one cannot feel happy with that situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it, therefore, means that we have a mission which is incomplete, therefore, we cannot mislead the people. There is a call for if we want to have a more progressive Caribbean civilisation, we need to become colour blind. How are we going to get that done? Do not let us fool ourselves, the variables that can clearly be enunciated and clearly demonstrated that one demonstrates sometimes on the grounds of ancestry and the pigmentation of individuals, you want me to exclude a glaring variable and tell the world that I am making a scientific analysis of a situation within the Caribbean.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is that race and class of people have always controlled the commanding heights of the Caribbean economy, as a consequence of criminal breed. Therefore, why is it that black men and women cannot make the call for an economic transformation? Why is it that the society stands before you as a mirror and you can see exactly who controls the economy, how long they control the economy, in a class and a race of people who continue to speak about the accumulation of wealth and you are looking to see if you have any extra from \$150 or \$200 a week's wage? You are a wage earner and wages are synonymous with poverty. Wages are between \$150 and \$350 per week. When you move up in the social class, they change the language and pay salaries by the month end and suddenly the rigidity, the divide-and-rule begins to play with the psyche itself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the inversion beginning to come back, to play with you, so you begin to believe that you have a right when you become a black salary earner, rising as far as becoming a governor or as a manager but owning very little. This black race owns very little. It owns a lot of minuscule plots of 2,000 and 3,000 square feet and we talk about how much land we own or about how much 4 x 6 plywood houses we have, as these Afro-Saxon escape the pressures of society, in some cases

deliberately distorting and undermining people who are attempting to transform the economy of this country, to transfer people from being in the state of that cultural phobia, who would suddenly want to paint a picture because they believe that they are part of the “talented ten”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a group and a principle enunciated by a remarkable Pan Africanist, W. E. B. Dubois, who had great difficulty in understanding the path of development that was enunciated by Booker T. Washington, who had a great problem in understanding the path of development that was promoted by people like Marcus Moziah Garvey. Sir, this is where the so-called “mickey mouse” culture that we hear about comes into play, when your brains has been caught in captivity, H:No.049(81)3l0 p.m.

Tuesday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

and, sir, all of a sudden you would believe that since powers were delegated to you by a master that you also inherit the ignorance, that you have some supreme intellect, that you are here to save your brothers and sisters who constitute the less noble in the system.

Master, master, our house in on fire. The Americans used to call it “nigger”, the one who felt they were more dignified called themselves “negroes” and “coloured”. Sir, these strange things divide the race and up to now we have these problems that came through miscegenation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a fundamental problem as black men and women. The great George Lamming said that he had never met a black man who was not afraid of a white man and sometimes I ask if it is not true. Kwama Nkrumah suggested to seek the political kingdom first and all things would come unto you. I ask myself how is it that we follow this direction and have the political power but are unable to transform the society. Sir, Thabo Mbeki has the same problem in South Africa and in the Caribbean black leaders talk things when they are in Opposition but talk something else when they are on the side of the Government. Sir, at the end of the day, nothing has fundamentally changed in transforming the wealth of this nation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing has been done and this is why when you look at the Stock Exchange you do not see small black businesses.

Sir, the palatable term at the moment is “small black businesses”. Some people have \$20 000 invested but by the time they pay wages and utility bills the business will survive for two years and then collapse or they may have to resort to the underground contraband approach to sustain the business over a long-term period.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I see these things I ask the following questions:

Have we fulfilled our historic mission?

Are we still in an atmosphere where there are white shadows in the system?

Sir, no man or woman worth his salt comes into a Chamber like this and cannot speak after the people

in the street select him or her as the duly representative to talk on these. We have an educated elite, the Afro Saxon, who wants to tell us how we as representatives in this country ought to think. Sir, suggestion is colour blind and then, the next suggestion is black man, be headless.

We do not understand how young black men who have been given access to secondary and tertiary education can now be classified as 'block boys and girls' and why human beings accept labels of this kind because they are indeed very pejorative. Sir, we are blind and headless when we accept these things from our brothers and sisters but if you interact with them and hear the feelings being expressed, you would understand why they are on 'the block'

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, you have two minutes to conclude.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Thank you so much for being so generous. Sir, when we offer labour we want value for it. We give it but we also expect compensation for the value we give and the young men on 'the block' have decided that it does not make sense to do certain things. I know they are not happy with \$150 or \$200 a week because it is a last resort in survival. They have looked to many different means of getting an income because they feel totally ostracised from the mainstream of the society itself. They know they possess the same pride and capabilities and sense of dignity where they ought to be given greater opportunities in the society.

Sir, I saw Mr. David Bowen, the representative for St. Michael South Central a few years employing secondary students with CXC's to wash yams and potatoes at the BMC. We now see black boys and girls weeding the streets of Barbados in order to feed themselves and their families. We have not honoured our historic mission and that is what is important about this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a Project Oasis because there has been alienation. When Project Oasis is finished and the opportunities through the Ministry of Social Transformation which has a complimentary programme to Project Oasis with information technology, we will have to find opportunities for them that are meaningful. Sir, I am not talking about finding any kind of work for them and please do not tell me that any work is dignified because that is not my perception of work. People who say that any kind of work is dignified will not do those jobs or want their children to do them. Sir, these are the harsh realities.

Sir, I want to beg your indulgence in concluding my presentation. The outstanding West Indian thinker, the Right Honourable Franc Fanon, is given honours by me in his book "Wretched of the Earth" where he speaks about national culture. He talks about how difficult it is to transform the psyche of our people and to develop a culture that goes beyond the performing arts.

He also said these words:

"Each generation must, out of relative obscurity discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it.

We must rid ourselves of the habit now that we are in the thick of the fight of minimizing the actions of our fathers."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to touch on a few brief elements in the dynamics of the Barbados political economy.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Thank you very much, Sir. I also rise on this occasion in support of the financial measures as laid in this Honourable Chamber by the Right Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Peter.

H49/3:

20 p.m.

Sequence 82

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

This gives me the opportunity to speak of the social policy direction of the Ministry of Social Transformation, where it is going and how it fits into Government's overall policy. I believe that after 5 years of existence that we have to reexamine ourselves and continue to look at our service delivery product.

Secondly, I want to share with this Honourable Chamber some of the initiatives and programmes that have been piloted by our Ministry. I would like to encapsulate this under the theme "Pathways out of Poverty Part II". I said Part II because in last year's Budgetary proposals I introduced Part I of this theme. I do not believe that once you say anything in this Honourable Chamber that it will be remembered. Sir, in fact, if you do not speak to it often, it will be forgotten and remains just a document of this Honourable House in The Hansard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Part II, I want to read, examine and let us at the Ministry of Social Transformation form a different perspective.

Sir, the Prime Minister spoke of the economic repositioning of the economy that is necessary for Barbados to overcome future obstacles and to also take advantage of future opportunities.

I believe that a social repositioning is necessary. I wish to say that process has begun with the restructuring of the Ministry of Social Transformation. This social repositioning demands that all of us are more cognizant that our social development is not a distorted development. In other words, there is no widening of the gap between the rich and poor.

Sir, a lot has been said in this debate as it relates to poverty in Barbados. I must say that poverty is a

very serious subject. I once said in this Honourable House that a young man came into my constituency office and said, "Hammie La, I came into this world naked and hungry and things began to get worse". I also met another person who said to me, "Hammie La, I prefer death rather than poverty, Sir". I also know, from a personal perspective, what it is to live in poverty and the experiences of poverty. I also know the humiliation. It is incumbent on every one of us in Barbados to treat our poor with dignity and respect.

Sir, when we look at the public reform programmes in Barbados, how do we shape and remodel and restructure our civil servants to treat our poor people when they come into the office? They should be treated as a dignitary rather than have to be embarrassed or go through a system of what I call unsocial interrogation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember the days when I had to go into Queen's Park for food and then walk up to The Pine and be humiliated by people who referred to me as 'Park Food'. I also know what it was like to go into the Steel Shed and wait in a long line to receive \$2.50. Each one of us despite our class and creed deserve the same level of respect. Therefore, poverty must be looked at critically.

Sir, it is critical that amidst our economic development that we continue to implement policies and programmes that will ensure that the most vulnerable groups in our society who need help the most benefit from any economic growth in Barbados, and are protected at the same time from any economic fallout.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Government has provided the best and most comprehensive safety net for our most vulnerable people, including poor, senior citizens, disabled and those single mothers who head large households. The kind of safety net that is currently provided for that vulnerable group is the most comprehensive in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Sir, I hear people talk about 'welfareism'. This Government signed the Copenhagen Accord in 1994 and one of the essential elements of that signatory was that we provide the necessary safety net for our most vulnerable groups. I am also happy to report that the efforts of government in protecting those vulnerable groups are well on the way.

I believe we have taken a multidimensional approach to poverty. In the Caribbean we are probably the only Government that pays water and electricity bills, rent and provide houses for the poor. Despite all the talk about poverty in Barbados, Government is working very hard to ensure that the safety net is provided for that vulnerable group of people.

Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation has embarked on programmes within the Government's overall policy, and our overall goal is to create a better life for Barbadians. I believe that all Barbadians deserve a better life.

Most of us are aware that the Government of Barbados has committed itself to the Millennium Development Goal and one aspect of that commitment is the reduction of poverty by 50 per cent by the year 2015. Yet an overall assessment throughout the world seems to suggest that this will not be achieved, but all the indicators as it relates to Barbados are pointing that by 2015 poverty in Barbados will be reduced by 50 per cent.

It is, therefore, necessary that we maintain a significant investment in our social services to achieve this objective. I am suggesting that Government and the private sector must be in partnership to achieve full social development objectives in order to improve the lives of Barbadians.

I also want to see the establishment of a special protocol with a third sector, the NGOs, CBOs and churches, the most overlooked sector. Sir, Barbados is beautifully poised at this time in terms of eradicating poverty and if the churches, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector and Government join forces before the year 2020, I am sure that we will be well on our way to eradicating poverty.

49/ 3:30 p.m.

Sequence 83

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 84, 3:

30 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, remember that I am speaking under the subject area of creating pathways out of poverty. Sir, we are using many programmes to deal with poverty reduction, alleviation and, eventually, eradication. One of these programmes is the shelter for the homeless in Barbados.

Sir, I want to use this occasion to thank more than 45 000 Barbadians who trek to Heroes Square to support the Share the Shelter Programme. I want to tell Barbadians especially the poor ones who put in their 25 cents, 50 cents, \$1, \$5, \$50 and the richer ones who put in their \$100 that from February next, February 28, 2005, we will be launching the Share the Shelter Programme.

Sir, we have identified a location at Eckstein Village. We know that the new facility is to provide 32 units including 10 one-bedroom units, 20 two-bedroom and two three-bedroom units. We are not saying that building this facility is going to solve all the problems of homelessness.

Sir, homelessness is so wide in Barbados that it is another intervention. In fact, at this proposed facility at Eckstein Village, we are providing a counselling room to accommodate approximately 15 persons. We would also be putting in an information technology component into this facility. We will be also creating an area where persons could gather and have exchanges, creating a kind of inter generational link.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you know, Barbados and the United Nations celebrated on December 3, the International Day of the Disabled. One day, certainly, cannot be enough to deal with all the problems as they relate to persons with disabilities. This Government, under the Ministry of Social Transformation will establish an Abilities Foundation in Barbados. This will be located at the NUPW.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Abilities Foundation is a skill's centre and we are going to dedicate this facility in the memory of the young gentleman, Mr. Craig Nurse, who died of muscular dystrophy. He was a young bright individual and we are working very hard to make sure this facility becomes a reality.

There has been a lot of talk, Sir, throughout Barbados, sometimes on the Call-in Programme, about the White Paper on Disability. We are in the process of establishing an advisory committee for persons with disabilities that will help to guide this White Paper.

We are also establishing an Inter Ministerial Committee to help to drive this process, so that the various Government departments could collaborate with each other about all of the recommendations that we have made in the White Paper to bring them to fruition.

Sir, I also sat with the Honourable Member for St. Philip South and we discussed bringing a new policy on transportation for the disabled to Parliament. There are people who believe that only the Government should provide these necessary services, but there is also a critical role for civil society and the churches to play a part within this national transportation policy.

In addition, Sir, we are looking at establishing a Disabilities Sports Agenda, under the caption of Disability Sports Barbados. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in actual fact, more than 1 600 Barbadians have graduated from our Sign Language classes. I believe that it should be made compulsory for every student at the primary and secondary school levels to be taught sign language.

Sir, a disheartening feature is that when the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition were giving their Independence Message to the Nation, many persons within the disabled community, who had a hearing defect complained that they could not understand what was going on. I am making the call for CBC to have close captioning on television, so that the disabled within our midst could follow every aspect of the news.

Sir, since the formation of the Ministry of Social Transformation, this Government has raised the subvention of all the disabled organisations in Barbados. Sir, you would have heard the Prime Minister enunciating in his delivery that the Barbados Council for the Disabled will be given a secretariat. It is my understanding that it will be called, Harambe House and this will be a milestone achievement for persons with disabilities in Barbados.

Sir, I am happy to announce that Barbados is now the Caribbean Secretariat for persons with disabilities. This came out of the Kingston Accord of which Barbados is a signatory. It speaks to the fact that what is happening in one country for persons with disabilities, should be happening in all Caribbean territories and Barbados has the mandate and responsibility of providing and disseminating information to all the other Caribbean islands as it relates to persons with disabilities. It is keeping in tune with the United Nations Declaration of Equalisation of Opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have heard and read that recently, we have also established a Micro Business Unit for Synergy for persons with disabilities, in conjunction with the UNDP and the Barbados Investment Development Corporation (BIDC). This is critical because you would remember when I began by talking about pathways out of poverty, the disabled community is one of those communities that would most likely feel the full effects of poverty, if we do not help them and provide the necessary

safety nets.

Sir, this micro business facility for the disabled is being operated from Fontabelle and I want to complement the UNDP and the BIDC for helping the Ministry of Social Transformation with this new initiative. In actual fact, we have made a commitment, that 10 per cent of our micro business funding from the Urban Development Commission is dedicated to those persons with disabilities who want to access loans. Additionally, we have all the other micro finance agencies or boards, so this Government is taking its commitment to the disabled community extremely seriously.

Sir, I would also say without any fear of contradiction that all of the new Government buildings are being made accessible for persons with disabilities. Probably, the Ministry of Social Transformation, located at Parry Street, is the biggest culprit, because we have to ascend some 30 flights of steps and persons with physical disabilities find it extremely difficult to get up those stairs. We are moving from that location in early 2005, and where we are going is disabled friendly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to compliment the Minister of Education for his Project OASIS programme.

House 049, sequence 84, 15:
4014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael East spoke of some of the programmes that we are doing in the Ministry, but I want to talk about programmes that have attracted a large number of young men.

This programme which is called the "Community Arts Career Programme" provides a platform for Barbados' creative industry. It is probably one of the most sought after programmes in Barbados. This programme was started at the Bonnetts and Speightstown Centres. It is now expanded into Grazettes and would soon go into St. Christopher.

Two of the major programmes in this Community Arts Career Programme is that of air brushing and computer graphics. Sir, 90 per cent of the enrollment are young males. This Programme is basically to help them to develop their talents into marketable and employable skills. Sir, this is so popular a programme that we are planning to expand it, not only to St. Christopher, but to the Ivy.

Sir, it would be remiss of me if I did not remind Honourable Members that a component of this programme is at the Parkinson Community Centre which is located very close to St. Michael East, so that the residents from over in St. Michael East could come over.

Sir, since we are into this kind of technological advancement, a lot of the young men and young women are going into the field of the arts, and using arts as a career. There is no reason at this point in our history why Barbados should not have a thriving film industry. Sir, I believe that every single

vacation we should establish a vacation school in the arts programme.

It is against this background that I would want to compliment the Pinelands Creative Workshop for doing an excellent job not only in the field of the arts but also in the area of community compensatory education, because people always look at the communities as areas where they would only find culture and sports. However, there is an organisation piloted by Mr. Rodney Grant, who is the executive officer, which has begun to chart new courses and open up new frontiers and horizons for the young people residing not only in St. Michael South East but throughout this country.

I believe that this vocational school of the arts programme that I am proposing should be teaching things like production management, stage management, acting, writing, directing and other such areas of the arts. Right now, Sir, I am rehearsing with a production that will eventually turn out to be the first local dramatic soap opera on television. I hope that the Honourable Members of this Chamber will tune into my frequency and see the Rastaman from the Pine on television. Sir, the arts is an exciting career and we have to now explore new avenues to really get our young people interested.

Sir, I know that I only have about a minute and a half...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

One minute.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. Thomas who gave a splendid delivery as it relates to new programming and the new ways that we have to go as it relates to our young people. Sir, over 6 800 persons have passed through our community technology programme. These persons range from age 14 to 85. Sir, you know that I have been in your constituency and we are looking in the next financial year to establishing a resource centre at Silver Hill where the supermarket was...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

How long do you think it is going to take?

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

The next financial year, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

I thought you would have it by March.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

It has to go to the new financial year, but it is on the books, Sir.

Sir, we have established 13 such centres across Barbados.

In conclusion, Sir, I want all Barbadians, those who are watching this debate on television and all of us in this Chamber, to join us because whether we like it or not and despite how we oppose each other, we are all in this thing together, we all come from this one rock and we are all part of the process of mental development where we want to see Barbados being the best country in the world as it relates to the

social sector. Therefore, as we go ahead, I am urging everyone, Opposition, Government, the churches, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations to join us in our quest to make this country the best that it can be.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Your time has expired.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir, and I will let no obstacle be greater than the cause.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a distinct honour for me to rise this evening to speak in this Honourable House in support of the Resolution and also to commend the Honourable Member for St. Peter for the excellent presentation of a comprehensive and creative Financial and Economic Policy Statement which is aimed at ensuring that this country does not encounter the pitfalls associated with trade liberalisation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no doubt that many of the very good constituents of Christ Church South would be the beneficiaries of many of these programmes, the incentives to small businesses, the support to the small hotels, the bed and breakfast accommodation fund programme and of course the young people. Old age pensioners would again obtain an increase in their pensions which is part of the history and the policy of the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, I probably need to remind Honourable Members of this Chamber of some of the interest we have shown in the care of the elderly and the old age pensioners. Bearing in mind the comments from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, my friend and my constituent whom I am sure voted for me, it is this Barbados Labour Party which is responsible for allowing old age pensioners to travel on buses free, it is this Barbados Labour Party which established the National Assistance Board and provided home help for the elderly, it is this Barbados Labour Party which started the payment of utilities for the old persons and it is this Barbados Labour Party which made access to drugs for those over 65 possible and created the alternative care for the elderly programme. This is just part of the continuum of support for the elderly within this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am being heckled and I want to ask where have all the flowers gone. Yesterday we came in here and all of the Honourable Members on the other side were bedecked in these colourful corsages although I heard somebody in the yard describing them as looking like wreaths. Indeed, before the end of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West's presentation most of them had taken them off and some of the persons in the Gallery were despondent, and I believe, disappointed and were leaving before he had finished his speech and I thought this was really surprising.

Sir, I do not know if you could describe it as a presentation. It was woeful. It was repetitive, monotonous and obviously written two or three weeks before by someone who is more familiar with designing costumes or perhaps leading a band than in writing a response for someone who hopes and sees himself as a Leader of the Opposition and as a future leader. I do not know if the others on the other side see him as that. This is the sort of thing that he comes in here and presents as a response. I do not know if it was a Kadooment speech because most times it was inaudible as he lost his way. It

was incoherent. It was inaudible at most and indeed it was a disgrace for someone who sees himself, even if his close political allies do not see him, as a future leader.

As we approach the challenges of trade liberalisation, for someone to come in here for one and a half hours to present as part of his presentation what I would call a veritable patchwork of some of the most incoherent aspects of the Democratic Labour Party columns, was a disgrace, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

House 049 Sequence 85

3:50 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. J. X. WALCOTT:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a disgrace. Sir, needless to say, considerable time was spent on the health care system in this country and, indeed, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has tried to score some political points, by trying to read from a press release that I had issued in 2000. I said “tried to read” because the Honourable Member was obviously unfamiliar with the terms and the territory. I do not know about his pronunciation because as I said, most of his speech was inaudible because when listening, one got the impression that he was trying to do something that he did not have the heart, the purpose, the sense, or the will to be doing in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether or not the Honourable Member appreciates it, whether or not he calls me “Doctor Do Little” or whatever, some progress has been made in health care. The situation did not occur overnight and in spite of whatever we are saying, in spite of the best intentions, the conditions will not be solved by waving a magical wand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government set up the Haynes Commission, and I believe the Honourable Member for St. James South is responsible for that. That Commission made certain recommendations for the delivery of health care in this country and in particular at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It spoke specifically to a change in the governance of that institution, an evolution to a board of management, which would take away the powers of management and control of that institution from central government and putting it into the hands of a Board of Management.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been making progress with this. In 2002, the Board has been named and has a composition of ten members. Sir, we all know of the selection process, although persons would go around and say that this is just another Governmental institution, it is not. I know that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central can bear me out on this. He is still being linked, in some delicate way, to the Congress of Trade Union and Staff Association of Barbados (CTUSAB). Sir, knowing full well about the composition, the Minister and by extension the Government, had responsibility for the selection of three persons to attend board membership. Representative of that Board comprised of the following:

(a)The Congress of Trade Union and Staff Association of Barbados (CTUSAB);

(b)The Barbados Registered Nurses Association (BRNA);

©)The Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP);

(d)The Barbados Christian Council;

(e)The Barbados Association of Retired Persons - and

some may say that means that the Honourable Member on the Other Side has a representative;

(f)The University of the West Indies;

(g)The private sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, therefore, there is a Board in which the Government of the day has direct influence perhaps on only three members, to be moving away from the controls of Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are moving along but we are having some difficulties and I think the entire country knows this. We have developed the draft terms and conditions of service for the members of staff and there is one union, and I say so deliberately because Congress of Trade Union and Staff Association of Barbados (CTUSAB) comprises of all the unions in this country, including that of the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that the Barbados Workers Union, the Barbados Registered Nurses Association, the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners, the Nursing Assistants and Nursing Aids Association of Barbados, are all committed and all represent employees at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The General Secretary of the National Union of Public Workers has said many times that they are not in favour of a Board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in spite of this, we have been meeting with them, trying to see if we could meet a common ground in the interest of the health care of Barbadians and also in the security of persons employed at that institution.

Sir, having said that, it cannot continue ad nauseam and as I speak to you, it is at a very delicate stage, where we are progressing towards preparing letters of willingness to members of staff. We, therefore, hope to make that full transition within the next three months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that my good friend, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, has an affinity and a magnetism to the Barbados Labour Party's Manifestos. I do not know if this adds anything to his political aspirations. Sir, in this, we spoke to a Queen Elizabeth Hospital Redevelopment Plan. I am happy to say that we have been through the tendering process for this plan and that consultants have been selected. It is expected that this work will start early in 2005. It is expected to last for approximately four months and will take into consideration the fact that this institution was built some 40 years, at a time when we were concerned about communicable diseases. Persons would now realise that the focus has shifted to the chronic non-communicable diseases and that

we have expanded facilities and different specialties. Therefore, the hospital necessarily has to move to keep abreast. It has to be expanded and has to develop certain facilities, in order to cater to the new shift in the disease process.

It is expected that this consultancy would look at preparing a hospital plan to serve Barbados for the next 25 to 30 years, to look at things such as the location of departments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this point, there is a situation where, in the original design, the Outpatients Department is at one end of the hospital, while the Physiotherapy Department at the other end. The plan is to look at such things as streamlining and making things easier for patients care and attention; looking at providing more bed space; expanding certain facilities; and making provision for a number of specialties, which would now have to be accommodated in this setting; and looking at the need to expand the Surgical Medical Intensive Care Unit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is expected that this consultancy would provide the sort of master plan for further expansion and retrofitting of the entire institution. As I said, it is expected to be completed by May, 2005.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, and I am not belabouring the point, has made a number of charges about Barbados' health system, therefore, as Minister of Health, I think it is my duty to respond to some of them. The Honourable Member spoke of problems of overcrowding on the ward, which is a given fact. This is primarily so on the medical wards. We have problems with an ageing population and in accommodating them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have discussed care for the elderly, persons who are being left in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where there are problems in finding beds for these persons. In addition, there is need to refurbish wards from time to time, therefore, when refurbishing these wards, there is going to be wards which would normally cater for 25 patients, being out of commission from time to time, which puts additional strain on the hospital as the time goes by. It is expected, however, that this matter would be addressed in this proposed redevelopment plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, mention was made of the continuous malfunctioning of equipment at the hospital. I must say that this situation is gradually improving. The Hospital Board has recently employed, for the first time, a Director of Engineering Services. He is presently looking at implementing a proper continuous maintenance system for the instruments and equipment of the hospital. This has never before existed. He is also looking at inventory management and control.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are looking at a general phased replacement of equipment, a lot of which are now aged and obsolete. Sir, since 2001, the Government of Barbados has spent \$14,843,000 on the purchase of new equipment for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, you would have recently heard of a guarantee of a \$25 million loan for the recapitalisation of that administration. Sir, \$18 million of that \$25 million is now earmarked for the provision of new equipment for the hospital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has mentioned the Dialysis Department. As I said, he was reading something that I had written in 2000. I know that the Honourable Member has an affinity and a liking for dialysis and I understand why his interest. Sir, I

want to tell the Honourable Member that there has been no problem with the dialysis machinery since 2002. He would know that the dialysis units were replaced and I am sure that he would have known if there were any current problems and I can assure the Honourable Member that there has not been any problems.

Sir, far from that, the dialysis services being offered at the hospital have expanded from a situation where we were catering from 25 persons in 1985 to one where, as I speak, I believe 102 persons are now being treated. In addition, Government is providing dialysis care for 30 patients in the private sector, where Government pays. In spite of the deteriorating health care that the Honourable Member has spoken about, we cater to persons in the private sector who need dialysis care, who cannot be accommodated at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at a cost of approximately \$45,000 a year per patient. In the interim, the hospital management is preparing to resite the dialysis unit, to make it a larger and more patient-friendly unit.

H:No.049(86)400 p.m.

Tuesday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. J. X. WALCOTT:

The Honourable Member needs to remove that from his repetitive speech. He also spoke about the kitchen but for his enlightenment, the kitchen was refurbished in August this year so the Honourable Member can take it off the list of speeches which they bring and regurgitate from time to time.

The Honourable Member spoke of nursing grievances and for the first time in Barbados, we have created flexi-time where nurses are now paid if they work double shifts. A nursing pool has been created like what obtains in North America and the United Kingdom where nurses who are qualified are allowed to move from one institution to the other.

For argument sake, if a nurse, trained in general nursing, is working at the Psychiatric Hospital, she can put her name on the list and if she has off-time she is allowed to work in the system at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Indeed, this is one of the attractions for nurses migrating to the United States because they are allowed to work at two or three institutions. It was never obtained in Barbados but it is being done now.

We increased the number of nursing assistants to reduce the workload of nurses and relieve the strain. For the first time Government created the post of health aide and well over 100 persons have been hired in this category. This also helped to reduce the load of the nurses as they look after their patients.

Sir, we are faced with the problem of migration and the shortage of nurses and we have increased the number of persons being trained as general nurses every year at the Barbados Community College from 30 to 90. This was done from September this year. As I speak, the board is also looking at the possibility of allowances for nurses who are working on the night shift. We have been looking at these things and at developing career paths for nurses because we believe if nurses want to go on in the system that they should be able to do so or to maintain a clinical path in management, education or research.

We have been implementing these things to assist in looking after nurses which, by and large, the vast majority are hard-working and dedicated. Sir, we are too quick to criticise and condemn and we should spare some time to praise the hard-working members of staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital who many times go beyond the call of duty.

Indeed, if you listen to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, you would form the impression that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was the worst possible hospital this side of the equator. I think we need to be honest with ourselves. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has deficiencies, there is no denying that but I ask you to tell me of one hospital anywhere in this world that does not have deficiencies or suffers from equipment which malfunctions. Sir, it is a norm because as long as there is a hospital, you will have problems and we need to work with these problems and soften the effects of them. Sir, in spite of everything that is said, there is not another health institution in the English-speaking Caribbean that provides like the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, free open heart surgery, free joint replacement surgery, free laproscopic surgery, free neurosurgical care and drugs all free at the point of delivery yet we criticise the Queen Elizabeth Hospital over and over again, Sir. If you went to the United States of America, you would be hard-pressed to receive any of these services free unless you had health insurance or medical aid.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard about neglect, wasting of resources and that money has been spent that could better have been utilised at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I want to look at some of the financial allocations for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital from the years 1991 to 2004. Let us use 1994 as a reference point for obvious reasons.

Sir, in 1994, \$61.9 million was allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and by 1998 it rose to \$84.8 million. Four years later, it had reached \$110 million and in this financial year, \$115 million had been allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. In addition, I should tell you that in the case of the emergency ambulance service that in 1994, \$1.3 million was allocated to this very important service and that in this year's Estimate, \$2.4 million was allocated not to mention the cuts to Queen Elizabeth Hospital between 1991 and 1994.

Sir, the Honourable Member spoke of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the strain that persons from other islands would bring to this country. I can tell the Honourable Member that between 2000 and 2004, some 2 188 CARICOM nationals were treated at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the revenue provided was \$1.8 million paid by those CARICOM nationals.

Indeed, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been seen over the years as a centre for referral in the Eastern Caribbean. We hope with the development of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy that we would continue to be seen as that centre of excellence within the region.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter spoke in his presentation about the possibility of having a private medical care facility established in Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West made the remark that it would be a centre for the treatment of the rich and famous. I want to ask him what is wrong with our doctors who were trained all over the world and recognised, treating the rich and famous in Barbados. Why should people who take ill on the west coast, St. Lucia or Mystique be

airlifted or flown to England if they can be treated here and Barbadian doctors can benefit from this. What is wrong with the Honourable Member for St. Philip West becoming a shareholder or having an interest in this new entity and being able to treat some of these people of whom we speak. I must tell the Honourable Member that doctors in Barbados are currently speaking about setting up a doctor's call centre to deal with people who come to Barbados who might take ill and that he might be interested in being part of this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I notice that my time is running out but yesterday, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West spoke about the Transport Board at length and I believe it is his latest sacred cow. He quoted from all sorts of documents, made some salacious comments and used innuendo. He mentioned that I was the Chairman of the Transport Board between 1997 and 2000. He asked some specific questions about how the buses were selected at that time and I would be delighted to tell him that a consulting engineer was hired and given a consultancy, in conjunction with the engineering department, and technical specifications were developed. There was a valuation committee was set to evaluate the specification. There were two categories of buses, large and small and in both categories there were seven bus types which were evaluated. In the large category, the Mercedes Benz was selected and the cost was \$204 000. H49/4:10 p.m.

Sequence 87

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

In the small bus category ACME was selected at a cost of \$188 000. There is no mistake to this. You had two different categories. It was asked why ACME Hino was not selected as a larger bus. It is quite simply because ACME was never tendered in the large bus category.

Sir, the impression was given that all Ministers of Transport and Works were driving Mercedes Benz. I would like to caution the Honourable Member that in 1988 the Barbados Transport Board purchased Mercedes Benz buses and in 1991 Mercedes Benz buses were again purchased. I do not know who the Ministers of Transport and Works were at that time and if they, in fact, drove Mercedes Benz cars.

Sir, I would like to compare for the Honourable Member a bus purchased in 2001 after thousands of people were laid off, after the 8 per cent cut, when the Board wanted to purchase some buses. The Honourable Member quoted from Transport Board documents and I will also quote from one, which I believe is a document of this Honourable House. It is the Annual Report for 1991 which speaks about overseas visits and I quote:

“ The General Manager and Chief Engineer traveled to Lisbon, Portugal to view a prototype Leyland bus and the visit was preceded by two other trips, one in 1989 and one earlier in 1990. On the first two occasions no unit was available for viewing as promised by the representatives of Leyland Duff Company and on the third trip the prototype viewed met few of the requirements contracted by the Board and this was documented in a report to the Ministry of Transport and Works.”

Sir, they traveled to Portugal three times to look at buses that they were purchasing. On two occasions the buses were not available and on the third time they said that they were defective and not

suitable and a directive was sent down from a higher level that these buses were to be purchased.

Indeed, if you look at the minutes of that meeting dealing with that whole process, you will notice that and I quote from the minutes of the Transport Board: "On February 19, 1992, in spite of the caution of the management of the Transport Board, they said that the Leyland buses had arrived in Barbados from Portugal. On March 25, one month later, the General Manager reported that 18 of the 25 buses were received and that some of them had started to develop mechanical problems."

Sir, within two weeks of being in Barbados, these buses, which were affectionately referred to as 'The Corn Beef Cans' by the public of Barbados because of their square and awkward shape, were malfunctioning after being in Barbados for one month.

Sir, the buses were purchased in 1991, arrived in Barbados in February 2002 and by March 2002 they were already malfunctioning. The Chairman at that time was a Mr. B. Collymore, who I believe is now deceased.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West also spoke about implementing a Transport Authority and going back on short routes and being profitable, but it was a Cabinet decision of March 1992 which said that with immediate effect the Board's services should be withdrawn from the Rendezvous Gardens, Silver Hill, Fordes Road, The Pine, Howells and Ivy, Bush Hall Yard Gap, Jackson, Eden Lodge, Holders Hill, Redman's Village and Grazettes. These were the lucrative routes and it was a Cabinet decision of 1992 that led to this.

Finally, we have been hearing over the last few weeks all sorts of stories about bus fares and how poor people would be affected and that the Government was contemplating an increase in bus fares and they have now changed their minds.

I want the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to tell me if he is aware of a Cabinet decision on February 10, 1994, which said in part that the privatisation of the Transport Board should not be pursued at this time but that the Barbados Transport Board operation should be made viable and agree to the abandonment of the flat fares and its replacement with a zone fare. The final zone fare would be between \$1.00 and \$2.50 per ride. This was in February 1994 and now the Opposition comes in 2004 to talk about a decade of deception.

Sir, the Opposition has the temerity to come into this Honourable House and speak about deception and tell the public that they are concerned about the government planning to increase bus fares, when on February 10, 1994 as a Cabinet, they had made a decision to increase it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have nothing more to say at this time but no doubt we will hear more about this in the coming weeks and I will stand ready and willing to share the information with the Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Sir, I am obliged to you and I commend the Honourable Member for St. Peter for this Economic and Financial Statement and I wholeheartedly support the Resolution.

I thank you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. James South.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to give support and make some comments in relation to the Economic and Financial Statement which was delivered by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter two days ago. In the course of so doing I think that I must also reflect.

Sir, ten years ago, September 2004, I came to this Chamber for the first time. During the course of those ten years I have seen the Honourable Member for St. Peter present to this Honourable Chamber and the country a number of Budgets which did not speak to large give-a-ways and reckless squandering but which spoke to trying to set the country on a strong economic footing, stimulating the major revenue earning sectors of the economy, creating a country in which there is social equity and justice, improving the circumstances of the poor and disadvantaged and creating a Barbados, which is competitive in the new global economic arrangements and a Barbados of which we all can be proud. Sir, I believe that the Budget which was delivered a few days ago is consistent with that vein.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question that the Opposition is asking, the common thread with we weave through every speech is that life is not better now than it was ten years ago. Sir, I would wish to suggest to the public that any independent and objective analysis of the evidence prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that life is better now, that our circumstances, as individuals and a country have improved considerably.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, other Honourable Members on this side have spoken to some of the improvements that we have seen over the last ten years. We talk about the problems in transport and getting from one place to another because of congestion and traffic. That in itself is a consequence of the success of the policies of this administration. We started on a deliberate policy when we came to Government ten years ago and found 40,000 cars on the roads in Barbados and we made a deliberate policy decision that every Barbadian should own a car or as many people who can afford them. Sir, because of the policies of the administration, between 1994 and 2004 the number of vehicles on the road has moved from 40,000 to 100,000 today.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party told us that there are no gangs in Barbados and when everybody in Barbados proved that to be false, we have confronted the challenges with crime in Barbados and now for three consecutive years we have seen the crime level reduced considerably.

Sir, Barbados continues to be recognised as the leading developing country in this part of the world. The statistics that give the truth of our economic growth and well-being, speaking to growth in various sectors of the economy, have consistently shown growth particularly in the tourism sector.

49/4:20 p.m.

Sequence 88

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 89, 4:

20 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Sir, there was a time when construction was leading the Barbados economy in 1997, and for two or years thereafter. Today, tourism is leading. There are some challenges with manufacturing and we have seen the Prime Minister put a stimulus package in place, intended to get the manufacturing sector and the other productive sectors of the economy, either invigorated or reinvigorated as is appropriate.

There is a recognition through the Budget that with globalisation will come an opportunity for us to brand Barbados, to put our cultural and other indigenous product out there in the marketplace to generate profit, revenue and foreign exchange for Barbados. Therefore, the Budget has in a stimulus package for persons producing goods of that ilk.

We have seen unemployment fall from the 1994 figures of nearly 30 per cent now to a mere 10 per cent and we continue to fight to put the number of people who are still unemployed out to work, particularly women. The statistics show that in the last few months and, certainly, over the course of this year, more women are working than ever before.

Sir, for young people we have created the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, and doubled the number of places at the University of the West Indies, the Community College and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic. We have, as a Government, improved the physical plant of Government properties all over the island from the police stations which were in a deplorable state in 1994, to schools, to other Government facilities and public buildings. At the same time, restoring the 8 per cent salary cut, giving people productivity bonuses, salary increases and classifying all workers in the public service as civil servants, and giving them the full package of remuneration and benefits to which civil servants are entitled.

We have seen our national image rise internationally. Again, no more do people laugh at us and the Barbados dollar as having no value. We had reached the stage in 1994, when the Barbados dollar was rejected in Trinidad and Guyana. Today, you can go all over the world and offer the Barbados dollar and have it exchanged and accepted. Our national image again is rising high.

In 1994, we could not borrow any money on the international market. Our name had been reduced to mud. Today, once again, Barbados can access funding, whether locally or internationally, because there is a level of confidence in the Barbados economy and in the level of growth being demonstrated consistently by our economic standing.

Sir, there is no magic wand solution. There are still problems to be solved. There are still challenges that we must confront as a people, such as social and economic problems. We need to look at the changing international market, and determine how best we can pay our way, how we can continue to do well as a nation, and how we can encourage our Barbadian entrepreneurs, who are still feeling that protectionist measures of the past are going to continue to apply indefinitely.

We need an aggressive business sector that is willing to go out there and push Barbadian products in the way that Trinidadian products have penetrated the Barbadian market. We have in fact been having discussions with the private sector and put stimulus packages within this year's Budget to encourage that aggression and proactiveness on the part of the local business sector.

There have been increases in old age pensions and improvements for the youth. Let us not forget that when we came to Government, there had been no increases in old age pensions for years, and the Democratic Labour Party was offering bus fare and lunch money solutions to young people.

Today, our young people are at work and those on the block are benefiting from Project OASIS. People in St. James and all over the country, are involved in vibrant training programmes in sports, business, computer studies, jewelry making and crafts for young people. There are new playing facilities lit at night that young people's energies can be productively and safely employed.

Sir, I am making the point of where we were ten years ago and where we are now. It struck me so much over the course of this week that ten years ago, we had politically a Democratic Labour Party in disarray in this country, fighting against one another, everybody aspiring to be leader, and the Democratic Labour Party members cursing each other in the Newspaper.

Sir, ten years later, when the public of Barbados is begging for a serious Opposition, we have come back to exactly the same point with the Democratic Labour Party cannibalising itself, its member cursing each other, the leadership in the newspaper, and one person telling you that the Leader is too intellectual, I am the real man for job. He goes to public meetings and speaks with venom and viciousness to persuade the public that he should be made the leader and says that call on me, I am ready, and call loudly because I want to hear you. The country is not concerned to get into their personal and ambitious struggle. We want to know what is the agenda that you have for the people of Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

We have listened in here during the course of this debate to one speech after the other on the Democratic Labour Party side, a lot of snares and innuendos and nastiness and no one has articulated yet any agenda for the people.

Sir, we heard that transport is bad but we have not heard from them what they are going to do. We heard that health care is bad but we have not heard from them what they are going to do. We heard housing is in a mess but they have not indicated what they are going to do.

Sir, I think the point the electorate made in the 2003 election, is that it is not enough to curse and insult. It is not enough to get up and say that there is a secret IMF deal, and that has been proven to be a lie. It is not enough to say VAT is going to be increased and that has been proven to be a lie. It is not enough to promote the politics of fear and envy. Therefore, go to the substance of the issues.

It troubles me, Sir, as a national leader that in a national debate, we could come to the Parliament of

Barbados, and all we are hearing about is suggestions of corruption. There was a suggestion of impropriety and fishiness at Silver Sands. What happened at Silver Sands?

We have a problem, Sir, in the public service. We in one agency, whether it is MPT or NCC, people go to work weeding the roads. They work for a very short time. We have a problem with productivity in a lot of the Government agencies and across the public and private sector which have to be addressed. Therefore, the problem at Silver Sands was not one of stealing, but a problem of how we manage our productive resources.

Sir, we heard talk about Mercedes Benz being purchased and a nasty snare about the fact that the Minister drives a Mercedes Benz, so we have to be very careful as politicians how we put out information. The suggestion now is that you cannot own a house unless somebody comes in here to criticise it. You cannot own a car unless somebody comes in here and suggests that you did something wrong to get that car.

Sir, if you, like the Honourable Member for St. George, bought a five-year-old Mercedes, cheaply from somebody who was leaving the country that then has to be a point of criticism, later on somebody will throw it in your face like you have done something very wrong.

Mr. Speaker, we must not encourage the public to believe that politicians get things by dishonest means. It will come back to haunt all of us. I believe that a vast majority of politicians are honest and upright. The problems that we had in Government occurred with the Democratic Labour Party.

In 1986, they were saying that Barbados Labour Party ministers were involved in drugs. It was under the Democratic Labour Party that dope came in the diplomatic bag. Sir, let us understand where we have had challenges, in relation to the agencies and the performance of Government.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Let me also make the point that...

House 049, sequence 89, 16:

3015

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

I have made the point.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Order, please, I would like to listen to the Honourable Member.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Thank you, Sir. The Honourable Member for St. John can no longer bear to sit with his colleagues and has come in for the first time now that he is about to perform to impress the public that he should be the Leader.

Sir, the other level of information that we got that was dishonest and far from the truth related to an application at Holder Hill. I was not the Minister of Town Planning at the time, but this matter came up during the 2003 general election campaign...

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Order, please, can I get some order, please.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Sir, in 1994 a person by the name of Clifton Neblett, an M.P. I believe for the Democratic Labour Party, made an application for a subdivision of land at Holders Hill on behalf of a dairy farm owned by a Mr. Babb. It went through all the processes. The Chief Town Planner indicated that the land was in zone 1 and not therefore entitled for approval for conversion from agricultural to residential and recommended a refusal. Consistent with the practice and the rules, the applicant, Mr. Neblett, appealed.

The Committee which hears the appeal is made up of independent professionals not ministers. Officials from the Barbados Water Authority and the Town Planning Department have to be present. He pointed out, or his team pointed out, that since the application was made in 1994 that a company by the name of Koln Crippen was doing a study looking at zone 1 lands and he believes that he would become entitled to an approval.

The Chairman of the Committee said that the application has to be refused because the lands are presently in zone 1. If the reports subsequently indicate that these lands can come out of zone 1 and the language was swift action should be taken to remove this land from zone 1, if the Barbados Water Authority no longer acquires it. That was the language of the independent professional who sat.

In October 1997 Cabinet took a decision from the Barbados Water Authority to take out lands not only at Holders Hill, but 323 acres of land at Crab Hill was taken out of zone 1 time, 504 acres at Sedge Pond, a number of acres at Greenidges in St. Lucy and at Norwoods. The impression is being given that it was done to facilitate..., but the application was by a Mr. Neblett for Mr. Babb.

The approval came out in 1997. They put in the application and said look the lands are now out of zone 1 and an approval was given to Mr. Clifton Neblett in December of 1997 not to anybody with the name of Shorey. He then made a sale of the land in 1998. The person who owned the land sold it to another company Horizons Investment. This has been going through the planning process system for years. Horizons Investment put in an application just like Mr. Babb's application to get the cut because Mr. Babb or Clifton Neblett now has the permission to change from agriculture to residential. They sold the land with the Town Planning's permission. They did not sell it for five cents, they sold it for a lot of money. The person who bought it then put in an application to create larger parcels. That happened in

1998. So that when you give the impression that all of this was created to facilitate somebody who is connected to the Barbados Labour Party, when you go through the fact, it is not the case.

Barbadians believe that where there is smoke, there is fire, so you mix falsehood with truth, you create an impression of corruption and you create the nasty talk and it is like kerosene and a match. You light it afire and it spreads.

I am concerned that that is the level of politics at a time as a nation when we must confront serious issues that the Democratic Labour Party continues to perpetuate. It is a level of dishonesty that the public does not deserve. The documentation is here. All we heard from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is that Mr. Shorey put in this application and Mr. Shorey got it changed and so on. It is here with Clifton Neblett's name on it. It came in before we were the Government in 1994.

Sir, anybody is entitled to make a profit. The owner of the land and Mr. Neblett made a profit when they got Town Planning permission. They did not give it away. They sold the land. The person they sold it to was Mr. Shorey and he then went on to resell. The Government did not do any dishonest manoeuvring to take that piece of land out of zone 1 to help them. Pursuant to the Koln Crippen study a large number of parcels of land from St. Lucy and other places came out of zone 1. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the Honourable Member for St. John is in an animated mood. I know he spent a lot of time in a lot of dubs recently and I do not know what substances are impairing him.

Now, let me move on. The slurs and nastiness, because that is what was contained in every speech made by the Members of the Opposition so far, was to create and weave a particular impression to give a falsehood about the Government, but people must concentrate on the issue of substance. I say to the Opposition that the average Barbadian is better off today than they were in 1994.

Sir, I want to turn to the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment. I left housing until last because very early in January we are going to have a debate on housing in this Chamber. I had hoped that we would have been able to do it before the Christmas recess, but that is unlikely now. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John is indicating that he is ready. In fact, he has been in the newspaper all week indicating that he is ready to take over from Mr. Mascoll, ready to cause more confusion in the DEMS and ready to change the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party, but despite his views that he is ready, in 2003 the people of Barbados formed the judgement that the Democratic Labour Party was not ready.

Indeed, if they continue in this present vein with all the infighting, it is clear that they cannot be in any condition to lead a Government. They cannot even lead one another. There are seven of them and you cannot find anybody who can emerge and bring serious consensus to the Party. It is regrettable. Errol Barrow must be rolling in his grave.

Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister spoke about the thrust toward e-government. I am pleased to say that the National Housing Corporation is in the lead in this regard because we have already set up our website www.nhc.gov.bb in such a way that you can now access all of our projects, see things relating to the Ministry, get information relating to the National Housing Corporation, put in an application for a unit or to buy a house or put in an application to purchase a house on-line.

House 049 Sequence 90

4:40 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

If you had in an application for a house years ago, you can change it now. You can e-mail us and tell us if there are any problems being experienced with the units or if there are any issues that you want us to deal with and there would be someone dedicated to responding to every e-mail which we would get. Sir, we believe that we have to bring a new level of service to the public. We believe that the public is demanding an interface that is high-level. Sir, the reality is that we are continuing to do all of this, against a background...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to share some information with you. It is not true to say that the new units and the new houses cost the same, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would have us believe. The units are on sale for approximately \$5,000 for the cheapest one, while those for example, in Bonnetts would cost \$40,000. There are three-bedroom units in wall.

In addition, I want to make the point that the National Housing Corporation, with all of its achievements this year, has struggled against having 312 units in the Farm Housing Area, with 148 in arrears; 335 units in Eden Lodge, with 171 tenants being in arrears, and I could go on. Sir, despite this, we are still doing our utmost to complete repairs, change windows and fittings that people are complaining about but more particularly what we have done in the last few months, is to attempt to articulate a policy which ensures...

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James South is misleading this Honourable Chamber. Certainly, the Honourable Member cannot deny that after some 37 years, the units in the Farm Housing Area have been valued at over \$47,000. What the Honourable Member is talking about is the subsequent discounting and other things but those units have been valued at over \$47,000 and that is the issue. Whether or not the National Housing Corporation now turns and gives a discount or a rebate, the fact is that those units have been valued at that amount, which, along with land, is almost \$50,000, to which I referred. Therefore, I cannot be wrong.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one buys a motor car, the value of that car at the date of purchase as is. That car continues to depreciate from the day it is purchased. On the other hand, when one buys property, the value of that property appreciates from the day of the ownership of that property. Therefore, any house or property would be valued, not at the date of construction but at the date of purchase. Therefore, the units were valued at the date of purchase, a discount was given and we are selling them so that nobody will pay the same \$50,000, as for the new primary homes because the selling prices, after the discount, are in the region of \$15,000 and \$20,000. Therefore, the Honourable

Member cannot say that the houses are being sold for the same price as that of the new primary homes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point of the primary homes programme...and we must be careful. Sir, previous administrations and politicians have told people not to pay rent to Government for occupying these units. They have told people about the desire not to see a cane blade. They have told the people not to pay water bills, that water should be free. Sir, then when we have these difficulties of governance and in the collection of revenues, we complain. It is misleading to give the public the impression that property values are diminishing, in a market where property values are appreciating and doing so rapidly. Therefore, to say to people that they are being unfaired when the properties are being assessed at the market value and being sold to prospective purchasers for far less than they are worth, is wrong.

I want to make the point that it presents an opportunity to people in this country to own property. The Democratic Labour Party has not denied that they were going to sell the units by a Cabinet decision, at far higher prices than we are selling them. Sir, under the Primary Homes Programme, we are able to offer concessions for property ownership, for everything from financing, to fencing, to furniture, because of the negotiations we have made. We have been able to get, in some instances, either reductions in legal fees, or the waiver of legal fees. We have been able to get the waiver of commitment and negotiation fees. We are facilitating persons with 100 per cent mortgages. Sir, from one of the institutions with which we are in partnership, one can get mortgages 70 per cent and over. We have negotiated with one particular institution that has never, in its corporate life, financed wooden homes in Barbados. Even though this institution has branches throughout the Caribbean, this would be the first time in its history they would be financing wooden homes in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the wooden homes come out of a good cultural tradition, where people would be given a start, which would allow the opportunities for growth and expansion. This is a policy where we are applying to the Town Planning Department for permission to construct three-bedroom houses, so that whether one buys a one-bedroom or two-bedroom, later on when one is ready to expand, there would be no need to submit another application to the Town Planning or to go the expense of getting new plans. As the plans would have already been obtained, that person would just have to continue with his/her construction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is that this policy deeply disturbs the Democratic Labour Party because these are the cheapest, most attractive and best quality houses on the market in Barbados and with land valued between \$15,000 to \$20,000, being the cheapest land in Barbados. We are selling them at half of what the private sector sells it and are, therefore, in a position to deliver houses to the people. We also have model houses available for persons to view and to assess for themselves. Sir, as part of the package, we have included small business persons to construct both wooden and wall houses for us because this creates a variety of options to individuals.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

The Honourable Member for St. John is asking what was done before. I think the Honourable Member needs to concern himself with what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is not doing.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member, could you please wind up.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the CASH Programme (Community Aided Self Help) by which people, the poorest of the poor, will be able to get houses in panels, only to be erected through sweat equity, that is, with the assistance of friends and relatives.

Sir, for the first time, we have a range of housing options that cater to persons of every income group. We have liquidity in the market as never before. Sir, this follows up on the work of the previous Minister of Housing, under whose leadership, the Barbados Labour Party administration sold land from its land bank, in excess of 1900 parcels, at \$7.00 per square foot and under. The department of Housing has also sold a large number of houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, housing is one of the greatest social demands in Barbados. I believe that we are bringing new options and new opportunities for all Barbadians. We are doing so within the context of an administration that is making the opportunity and benefit available to all. We will continue ensuring that we lead the country in a way that allows all Barbadians access and opportunities for personal and social growth in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I urge the Barbadian public to stay with the responsible leadership which we are attempting to give and not be misled by the politics of deception, the politics of dishonesty, the politics of mixing truth and falsehood and giving false impressions, rather than the politics of substance.

H:No.049(91)450 p.m.

Tuesday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Sir, mere criticism is not enough. The Democratic Labour Party after ten years must get its act together and see if it can offer substance after finding a leader on which they can agree.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say what a privilege it is once again to participate in a debate which the public of Barbados, particularly the people whom I represent are able to place their spotlights very squarely on the performance of the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would first like on behalf of all fair-minded Barbadians to empathise with the management of our radios and television station in this country and the electronic media as a whole for the substantial loss of earnings they would have sustained over the past three days. Sir, I say that

because the logic and rationale behind the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Peter coming to the country at this time of the year just two or three weeks before Christmas with a bag of nothing to offer the people of this country perplexes me.

Therefore, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and even perhaps Starcom Network would have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars at this time of year in valuable advertising simply because not only is this period block from normal advertising but because of this debate, viewership and listenership on our radio and television stations would have declined significantly. This is because this exercise has become lower and lower in the priority of Barbadians. Sir, you could hardly find six people who could consecutively tell you that a Budget debate is taking place in Barbados over the past three days.

Sir, this annual exercise, for want of a better term, has to my mind become a virtual 'pappy show' as the Trinidadian would call it with not even members of the House taking it seriously. There was a time when even Members of Parliament, like the Honourable Member who just spoke, would make a trip to Miami and buy the latest hat and outfit to be pictured walking into the House of Assembly. I hope if she resumes that practise that she would take the Honourable Member for St. James Central with her and add a handbag to that particular collection of his.

Sir, now it is just an ordinary day's work in here...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is too long in the Parliament and knows better than to impute improper things to Members of this House. To suggest that the Honourable Member for St. James Central needs a handbag is an unfortunate imputation that reflects less on the Honourable Member for St. James Central and more on the Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, I did not know that anyone in here had a problem with that other than the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. I did not impute improper motives to anyone. I asked the Honourable Member for St. James South to carry her colleague with her. There is nothing wrong with that because it is all I asked.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

You may not want to go there and that is the reason why you do not hear what is happening in Barbados either from young people, middle-age people or older people. This is precisely the problem that this particular Budget debate reveals. It reveals the extent to which Honourable Members on that side have lost touch with reality and with the concerns of ordinarily people living in this country. This is why the public gallery would be empty all week and the yard would only have security officers and cars in this day and age. It is not for me to tell you this but I would tell you that you have lost touch with reality in Barbados and the concerns of average Barbadians.

Sir, as far as I am concerned, you should get as good as you give. Therefore, no member in this Chamber is going to find himself, particularly not on the other side, fooling the public of Barbados and not receiving a response from members on this side because we have a bounding duty in that regard.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Peter brought the entire country of Barbados to a standstill on Tuesday when everybody would have been expecting him to deliver something of substance or significance to their lives. Predictably, he had absolutely nothing new to say to the people of Barbados. Sir, the presentation, with all due respect to the scriptwriter, could have been put in a GIS Release and sent by surface mail from Government Headquarters for publication in the newspapers in Barbados.

We have to understand what we are talking about because I know that Honourable Members on the other side would not have the problem of being concerned about what was in the content of the Budget because they are out of touch with reality. I would have had tremendous difficulty explaining to any ordinary citizen in Barbados what the Budget was about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you examine it, the newspapers yesterday left it to the reader to search around to find out exactly what the Prime Minister had said in his Budget presentation. The Advocate News could not find anything good to say about it so the headline read "No New Taxes" as if the Government of Barbados could have imposed an additional tax on the people of this country. Sir, almost every square centimetre of the pockets of the taxpayers of this country has already been taxed. I hear Honourable Members on the other side saying it was a great Budget because there were no new taxes. The Government can collect more revenue year after year based on the same taxes that are in existence but Honourable Members on the other side say there are no new taxes as if no new taxes mean that you only get more revenue when you introduce a brand new tax.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James South is on a mission and I will leave him on that mission. He is going to find the Digicel Fugitive. When he finds him, I do not know what he is going to do with him but he will find him but, Sir, it will not be me.

Sir, it was not only that there were no new taxes. The headlines in the newspapers yesterday should have been "No New Ideas". The Prime Minister of this country is truly tired. He confessed to the country three weekes ago that he was on 18 months long leave and that he is now back but if you calculated it backwards from the time when he said that, can you imagine that it would have been 18 months from the date he was elected in the last elections. Sir, he got elected and immediately went on leave for 18 months, said he handed over the Government of this country to younger people to give them a chance to see what they could do.

S49/5:

00 p.m.

Sequence 92

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

He then came back and had to try to stamp his imprimatur on a Government that he had left to

novices.

Sir, the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown would not know about that and the public would not know that the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown almost found her seat declared vacant under Rule 72.2 for being absent from Parliament for more than three months.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

On a point of order. I am on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. John knows, for the entire duration of his life in this Honourable House, not to interfere with me.

The Honourable Member for St. John is out of this jurisdiction more often than I am and I am speaking to you under the influence only of water at this time.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really thought that the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown had risen to deny that her seat almost got declared vacant - Standing Order Rule 72.2 - for being absent from this Honourable House for almost three months without an excuse. The Government had to rush and convene a Sitting of the House that an elected

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John knows that there is no truth at all in what he has said. I do not get vacation. I am only ever away from this Chamber when I am on the Government's business abroad. It cannot go on like this. The Honourable Member has come in here to do nothing but run interference and that is all that he is doing. Let him address the Budget and stay away from me. Do not put me in a place now where I have to start talking about Courvosier. Do not put me in a place to start talking about post-prandial delight.

Aside.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House. The Honourable Member made an allegation that the Government had to rush and summon a Sitting of this Honourable House to facilitate anything. I am Leader of Government Business and I can tell you for a fact that there is absolutely no truth in that.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Standing Order does not require you to be on vacation. The Standing Order only said that if without leave of the House any Member shall be absent from Sittings of the House continuously for not less than three calendar months, the seat of that Member shall be declared vacant. I said that the Honourable Member almost fell afoul of that Standing Order.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

One moment, please.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

The Honourable Member is making reference to himself because he is never away on Government's business. It is absolutely not true what he is saying. Nobody knows the Rules of this House better than I do.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, could you please continue with your presentation? I would like you to stick to the subject matter.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, I can refer to the Standing Order at any point in this speech. I am not challenging your ruling but the Standing Order governs the procedure in this Honourable House and I am entitled to refer to any Standing Order at any point in any presentation that I make in this House.

Sir, I am going to say that I will treat the Honourable House as seriously as the Senior Member on the other side treats it. Sir, when the Honourable Member for St. Peter comes in here and faces off with Members of the Opposition other than those cameo appearances, whether the Budget or Caribbean Single Market and Economy...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House again and imputing improper motives. The Honourable Member is entitled to recite facts but as he does so, to suggest that there are cameo appearances suggest that the Right Honourable Member is treating the House with disdain. He cannot make that imputation in here and if he does make it, it means that he has to carry himself along in it since he comes in here at 1215 p.m every Tuesday and leaves by 230 p.m and in that period of time there is an hour's lunch.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member for St. John, I would like you to stick to the matter before us. I have had sufficient of that. Could you stick to the matter before us?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, do you want to stop me from speaking?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

It is up to you.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, you can stop me if you want to.

I am speaking about the status of this House in our social, economic and political development. I am saying that when the Honourable Member on that side takes this Chamber seriously and gives information and comes in here and faces those who are contributing to a national debate, instead of treating the back benchers like step children and outside children and not responding to the needs of Parliament, then I will keep quiet. I am not going to let anybody stop me from saying that Members on that side treat this House with complete contempt and disdain. They come to this Honourable House when they want to, make cameo appearances and, therefore, there is no wonder that the public of this country does not place this House in the kind of esteem that it should be placed, coming against the background of a pledge of the Honourable Member for St. Peter to place this Honourable House at the centre, once again, of national development. I am dissatisfied with that and I am entitled to say it. The only reason why I am here is because Members on that side would have launched attacks on the Democratic Labour Party that are not only unjustified but are unreasonable.

Sir, the Honourable Members on that side have been given a mandate in the last general election and can you imagine that three weeks before Christmas they could not address a single concern that relates to the manufacturers in this country, tourism, farmers, operators of mini buses or even the public officers in this country?

Sir, how could the Honourable Member for St. Peter, knowing the concerns of people working in the agriculture sector in Barbados or on industrial estates and who are supposed to be listening to this debate, after speaking for two-and-a-half hours have not said a single word about the plight of those people working in those sectors of our economy. He needs to improve the condition of work and to protect them from known abuses.

Sir, we hear a lot of beautiful talk about service excellence. How can you get service excellence out of people who are being abused and exploited in the workplace in this country? We cannot talk about service excellence unless we are totally detached from the reality of what is happening in the workplace in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister did not only leave us for 18 months. He also abandoned Barbados in mid-ocean. The Prime Minister came to this Honourable Chamber with a Budget. He does not like to call it a Budget but this is what this annual exercise is. Everywhere in the Caribbean it is called a Budget. There is a presentation by the Prime Minister, the Opposition replies and there are speeches by other members and it is called a Budget debate. Here in Barbados we have to put perfume on it. I do not care what the Honourable Member for St. Peter puts on it, it is a Budget and it is a Budget that identifies very clearly, for all who are watching, that the people of Barbados are in a ship with a captain who has no compass.

Sir, the Prime Minister came back to work without his compass and that is the problem that is identified in this particular debate. It was a piecemeal, half finished, rushed job by somebody who has not been at work for a long time. The Prime Minister obviously had no personal input in it, and as I said a few weeks ago, he is obviously not enjoying the job.

Sir, there was not a single motivational statement that would point this country to the direction we are taking. We have countries all through the Caribbean, Trinidad is moving to first world status, countries in the Caribbean are doing some of the things that we are now talking about in terms of traffic

congestion, improving their hospitals, spending money on social services and building schools, but we are complacent to tell people that Barbados is a wonderful place, we have democracy, we are high in the UNDP index.

49/ 5:10 p.m.

Sequence 93

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 94, 5:

10 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Yet, the roads are shot to pieces as soon as the rain falls. Flooding, this Government was given millions of dollars over nine years ago and the Honourable Member for St. Peter said he would put behind us for ever. He was going to clean all the wells in this country, and a lot of people got rich after that project.

Sir, if all the wells were cleaned, we would not have flooding, but every time we have rain in this country for two or more hours, the entire country is almost shut down. Sir, \$42 million or more in ten years were devoted exclusively to this flood relief unit, through an action team that was going to be put in place with the private sector to put flooding behind us for ever. This is the kind of nonsense that we have been treated to, down through the years in these exercises.

Sir, that is why I am telling you that Barbadians would have to be coming to the conclusion that the Prime Minister is tired. He has no focus, compass, and he does not know where Barbados is going. This does not mean he is politically dead, because even a Doberman with dentures has life and he would try something.

Sir, in this particular exercise, you can rest assured that before this debate is finished, the Rt. Excellent Honourable Member for St. Peter is going to come in here, files in hand and put down one of his cameo performances again, in which the attacks will be on the Democratic Labour Party. The focus would not be on the mandate he got in the last election, but on the individuals in the Democratic Labour Party.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

If I run or, that is not my business. I represent the members of St. John effectively. They determine whether or not I am in here, and not Honourable Members on That Side.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, the Prime Minister wants people to fear the wrath of his tongue. I will not be intimidated, and Honourable Members on This Side must not be intimidated by those performances. We must expose the emptiness of this Government at every cross and turn in Barbados, so getting up and shouting like John King that I am back as the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter has done is one thing, but what is more important is demonstrating an awareness and a sensitivity of the issues that affect the people of this country, and to address those issues in a meaningful way.

Sir, the Prime Minister has demonstrated in this particular Budget exercise that he is out of touch and out of tune with the reality of what is happening in Barbados. Sir, later on in this debate the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter will come and try to decapitate Honourable Members on This Side and produce files. He will speak even of my naked ambition as did the Honourable Member for St. James South, and how I am after his job.

I want to say this, Sir, somebody should be after that job because it has been vacant for the past 18 months, that is the problem, so somebody should be after the job of Prime Minister in this country. Unless all of these great men and women on This Side have no ability, competence and integrity - and I doubt that, Sir, I believe they have it - to hold such a position, I would have to ask the question, how it is that 23 people could sit down for 18 months, while a Prime Minister is on leave and not one of them could step up to the plate and say that I am worthy and have the ability to give Barbados a compass and help carry this country forward. That is why it has to come from This Side of the Chamber.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

It cannot come from there. You all have been tried, tested and proven already in that regard.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a laughing matter. I want to take a few minutes though to ask the Prime Minister to focus on the real concerns of people in Barbados. The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter must know that whenever he is finished beating up on me, and we get into our cars and head to our homes or houses as the case may be, tomorrow morning when we get up, life is going to be reasonably comfortable for us. This is the reality and it is going to be reasonably comfortable for almost every single Honourable Member of this House, except for a few irritants. But for the vast majority of us who would have been looking to this Chamber for an opportunity for a little hope and direction, such as the single parents in the country who are living on fixed incomes, who cannot make ends meet, the job seekers in Barbados who have been writing letters to almost every single establishment in this country and cannot even get an acknowledgment far less an opportunity for a job interview, say something to them. Sir, give them a sense of where you are carrying Barbados. This is my appeal to the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Sir, as I say, beating up on me would not answer their concerns, if he is not going to answer any of the concerns of the people, whom as I said, are exploited in the workplace, the people who find it hard to make ends meet in this country, or the thousands of young people who have a good education but are being crowded out in jobs that otherwise they would have been getting in this country, as a result of the

policies of this Barbados Labour Party administration.

Sir, the debate in here should not be an opportunity for people just to beat up on each other, but for us to set that economic and social compass in place.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

This is what is important and it is your job, you are the Government.

Imagine we could be in a debate in here today and an Honourable Member could say that the problem in Barbados in health is that the Democratic Labour Party has not come up with any ideas to deal with the problems ahead.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

The problem in housing is that the Democratic Labour Party is too caught up to come up with a problem. Leave the problems and issues in the Democratic Labour Party to the family of the Democratic Labour Party. You are elected to do a job. Do your job and you have 23 Honourable Member to do it with and you say you have a sound economy with money. You have no impediments and you have all the private sector lining up to say that you are such a great Government doing such a great job at every Budget time. There is nothing that should stop this Government, if it had the ability and ingenuity to do the task that is necessary to carry Barbados forward.

Sir, all we hear in every Budget debate is a lot of griping from Honourable Members on That Side about the Democratic Labour Party and how we are retarding you from achieving something, and how ten years ago we shut down something. And, for ten years you sat down with your arms folded after being given three massive mandates. Ten years later, you cannot find a solution and you are supposed to be the brightest and the best, the right team and everything for the future of this country.

Sir, the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter would have turned up two days ago for duty, as captain of the ship, but he left his compass at home or lost it altogether. Therefore, he would have taken us into an ocean and failed to charter a course on how he would get us safely back to land. This is why Barbados is right now completely adrift and going nowhere. We are not headed in any particular direction. We are drifting and there is no compass on board to tell us whether we are going east, west, north or south. The captain has abrogated his duty for 18 months and he returned just in time for this Budget exercise, so that Honourable Members on That Side can parade again before the public of this country.

Therefore the country, Barbados would have to be left to wonder, Sir, where we are as a nation and where this Government is, under the leadership of the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter. This Government has run out of steam and the Government has lost its way.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member has one more minute.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Thank you, Sir.

There is a vacuum in the leadership of Barbados that needs to be dealt with, Sir, and I believe that Barbados emerged from a general election only last year and is almost back into a general election mode in this country.

Honourable Members on That Side have not been able to focus the attention of the people of this country sufficiently on the issues that need to be dealt with to take this country forward. Sir, at the end of the day, we all know it will have to be the Democratic Labour Party that would rescue Barbados from the situation in which it finds itself today, under the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, my advice to the Government of Barbados is to simply focus on the mandate that was given to them by the people of this country.

House 049, sequence 94, 17:

2014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

I am confident that if Honourable Members on that side would spend some time doing the job they are responsible for doing and are sworn to do, instead of focussing on all kinds of trivia and excuses, Barbados would be able to get back on course and the Honourable Member for St. Peter would be able to find his compass.

Sir, I hope the Honourable Member for St. Peter does not end his debate tonight by wishing people a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. I hope not because after all that has gone on in here and having delivered nothing to the people of Barbados in 18 months, the Honourable Member for St. Peter would have the audacity or the temerity to tell the people of Barbados to have a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. I hope that does not happen, Sir.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, vacated the Chair and Mr. Speaker, resumed the Chair.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to rise in this debate to support the Economic and Financial Statement of the Right Honourable Prime Minister which was delivered on Tuesday. I do so not only on behalf of myself but of the constituents of St. Michael North East.

Mr. Speaker, those who were listening, and they are some who are listening in spite of all that the former Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Member for St. John had to say, would have been

disappointed that yet again he continues to rise in this House and to seek to avoid every possible contact with every possible Economic and Financial Statement. He does so under the pretext that he is speaking for the people and that the Government yet again has delivered an Economic and Financial Statement or a Budget that has nothing in it for the people and that the ordinary man cannot understand it.

Mr. Speaker, that is for those who have short memories or for those who are untrained because when you go back to his one and only Budget, he spoke to the people about indirect tax reform, insurance and legislative changes, paid-up share capital for the insurance companies, solvency requirements, the settlement of claims, energy cost, monetary policy and capital market development. The only measure he spoke about for the ordinary man was bus fares and lunch money.

What do we have here today, Mr. Speaker? He chooses not to come in here to hear anything when the week comes but yet would talk about other Honourable Members. Mr. Speaker, he wants to know what is in this Budget for the ordinary people. Mr. Speaker, he may be able to afford to pay for his children to go to preschool but there are thousands of Barbadians still, parents of 30 per cent of the pre-primary population, who cannot afford to send their children to pre-primary school in this country. Mr. Speaker, when I was at the Ministry of Education I made the point, and I am happy that this initiative today speaks to the Government completing that project within three years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know what the members of the disabled community are when the Government commits to meet the operating deficits of the organisation that would work for the disabled community. I want to know, Mr. Speaker, who operates the bed and breakfast in this country, and what is that \$5 million fund for. Mr. Speaker, it is certainly not for the big planters, big companies or big hotels, it is for ordinary Barbadians who have a little room in their home because the family may be small or may have moved out of the home and who believe that they can help contribute to the accommodation needs of this country for tourism and in so doing get a piece of the pie; "A Fair Share For All". Mr. Speaker, these are the things that we have put in here. We have not come here with a one-sided view. Therefore, it is hypocritical in my view for members from the outside or the inside to look on and say that this Budget does not deal with these people as if you can have a Budget or a financial statement dealing with one or two categories of people.

Mr. Speaker, an economy is made up of many factors. There is labour and there is capital. If he had come here to engage seriously on the development strategy put by this Government I could understand. If he had come here, Mr. Speaker, to treat to the issue of whether governments, as we move into the second generation of Independence, have sufficiently moved themselves to remove the psychology of dependency from our productive structures and from our people such that we can have higher productivity and that we can have persons producing at greater levels rather than consuming so that we could move away from the difficulties that the Prime Minister has signalled, that there may be balance of payments problems because we are not producing enough in this country and our consumption patterns are getting greater, that is the kind of debate I would have expected a person who served as Minister of Finance in this country to come in here and engage upon.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

On a point of order. I do not and cannot use those big words, I speak very simply, so the Honourable Member could not expect that of me.

Mr. SPEAKER:

That is no point of order, please.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I empathise with the Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, if I had spent my afternoon doing little and making merry, I would also come in here and say that I would not recognise big words this evening too. Mr. Speaker, a man who just used the word imprimatur cannot now come and tell this House about big words. Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of treatment that we are accustomed to in the House from the Honourable Member for St. John. He says one thing and you have to follow him carefully because he comes later and say something completely different.

Mr. Speaker, I can empathise with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who, unfortunately, is dealing with these issues not only in George Street but in Independence Square and in the supermarket if we are to believe about all the phones calls. However, Mr. Speaker, I am not getting into that this evening because I want to treat to the issues in the Economic Statement. Mr. Speaker, I will come back to the Honourable Member for St. John before I finish speaking, but I have other things to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, unlike him, I want to raise the issues that are in the Budget and then I would come back to him because I know that he remembers that I do not pick fights but I know how to finish them and I am going to finish them with him today on behalf of the Royal Barbados Police Force, so he can wait for that. He can stay tuned for that.

Mr. Speaker, before I sit here today we would understand the level of behaviour that comes from the Honourable Member for St. John when it comes to public conduct. Mr. Speaker, I may be wounded but I can finish fights with people who cannot stand.

Mr. Speaker, this country is facing the most difficult and complex challenges. Mr. Speaker, we have come to this House willing to speak frankly with the people of Barbados and to signify to them that we understand the challenges confronting the country, that we also understand why we may do as much as we would try to do as a Government and that the efforts of the private sector, the efforts of the union movement and the efforts of the whole population are required to help us through.

Mr. Speaker, it is nothing unusual because in a very real sense when the Prime Minister spoke about the National Initiative for Services Excellence, the need to change attitudes and the need for us to be more competitive in the services sector, it was much the same thing that emanated from the National Commission on Law and Order Report.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come in this country for sober reflection, forget the party politics and the party divide for a second, and for us to recognise that we have reached a junction in Barbados where there is an urgency in us understanding that we can no longer buy goods at a faster rate than we are producing in this country.

House 049 Sequence 95

5:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate phenomena is that everybody feels that the other person will do the production; that the other person will earn the wealth; and that the other person will make the things happen that will expand the productive capacity of this country. Sir, the truth is that it is incumbent on everyone of us to be able to play our role to the maximum of our abilities in being able to see what we can do to expand in this country. Therefore, when I speak about removing the psychology of dependence and moving to one of greater self-reliance and greater determination to produce what we use, that is what I am speaking about.

Sir, there was a time when this kind of talk only engaged academic discussions but the reality is that countries like Barbados, with small open economies, will continue to have difficulties if we do not have a base upon which we are doing two things, which are, being able to produce, thereby earning foreign exchange and, being able to produce more to meet domestic demand such that we do not have to spend the foreign exchange, to be able to import the goods.

Sir, that is all the Honourable Prime Minister is talking about when he speaks about the current account deficit and the need for us to get it in hand. Sir, the difference with this side is that the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter speaks about it, at a time when our reserves are still over \$2 billion, and at a time when we have more than 35 weeks of import cover and not at a time, as in 1991, when our reserves were at \$45 million, or in 1992 when our reserves were at \$200 million.

Therefore, the Government, through the Honourable Prime Minister, has chosen to be frank in the engagement of the public because we recognise that in order for us to get where we want to go as a nation, that all entities must be on board.

Mr. Speaker, I say that, cognizant of the fact that there are still those who are comfortable in all production strategies, believing that we will continue to benefit from preferential access and protection in the way that we did for the most of the time as an independent nation. Sir, the truth is, we have said over and over, that those days are over.

Mr. Speaker, the difference is that when the Honourable Member for St. John brought his Budget three days before the World Trade Organisation's commitments, the Honourable Member did not choose to engage the public in the discussions as to the implications of those commitments, in relation to our production structure, in relation to the ordinary man and woman, for whom false tears are now being shed.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you, these are the things that would have to engage national dialogue. Sir, I would have hoped that not only the Honourable Member for St. John but all Honourable Members would have come here and would have engaged at that level. Sir, we may agree on a common development objective for Barbados, and both parties have followed the same development models in

terms of parties, but at the end of the day there would be disagreements in terms of how we get there. That I can understand and can deal with but instead, as the Honourable Member for St. James South has said, we have been treated to a tissue of innuendos and slurs.

Mr. Speaker, I feel honestly that more is expected of us, particularly those of us born in the 1960s who have already been the beneficiaries of sacrifices made by the generation before us.

Mr. Speaker, what are the complex challenges? It is not a one-dimensional challenge that we face anymore. We are facing globalisation and liberalisation at the domestic, regional and international levels. Sir, all of those policies have implications for existing jobs, for companies that are producing and for profits that are being made and, therefore, by extension, for the programme that a Government can undertake.

Mr. Speaker, if those were the only two challenges with which we were faced, it would not be a bad thing but we are also now facing an increased and heightened tension, as a result of September 11th 2001, which places international terrorism at the centre of almost every international policy decision. Therefore, the implication for small states such as ours are tremendous because they are requiring us to do things with limited resources, in circumstances where the risk may not always be the same with us as it would with a larger country at the centre of international terrorism but in order for us to be able to remain part and parcel of the international economy and international society, we cannot renege from some of these obligations.

Sir, by the same token, we have to be cognizant that because tourism is our major industry, there is an inherent vulnerability that we face as a country, particularly since the majority of our tourists come from the United Kingdom and the United States of America; countries that are at the heart of the battle for international terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, as if that was not enough, we are also facing the vagaries of cultural slippage. What do I mean by that? The reality is that more information is consumed in Barbados that is produced from outside of Barbados, than that which is produced from within. Sir, tourists arrivals totaling four times our population come to this island every year, compared to what we have on the ground. Therefore, it is inevitable that the values of this country and the attitudes of Barbadians will become subjected to those influences, whether those influences would be in terms of youngsters wearing their pants low on their hips and baggy; whether it is in terms of persons wanting to live the lifestyle of the Bronx, as opposed to one that we can empathise and can come up with; or whether it would be in terms of our consumption patterns, such as what we buy or the kinds of foods we eat, such as fast foods.

Mr. Speaker, I came across this information in the Ministry of Education, where children in urban parts of Barbados would eat ground provisions and children in Bridgetown or the rural parts, were only interested in eating macaroni pie, chicken and chips. In fact, fast foods that were not related to their good health.

Mr. Speaker, those are the kinds of challenges that this country is facing. Therefore, in that context, we have added a strategy that will see us repositioning ourselves, such that we can plan for an economy that is more than 250,000 persons, based on a Caribbean market, so that our producers of services, not only lawyers and doctors but hairdressers, funeral directors, carpenters, et cetera, can have an

opportunity to supply their services to more than 250,000 persons.

Mr. Speaker, that is what this Economic Statement and the strategies that we believe that we will come to use are about. Sir, instead, what do we have? We have an Honourable Member coming here and telling us that, for example, the only reason that he, the Honourable Member for St. John, has come to this debate was because the Government was going to launch an attack on the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I only have to tell the Honourable Member that we do not have to launch an attack on the Democratic Labour Party. The Honourable Member has done it well enough on his own, whether it is in Independence Square or at George Street Headquarters. Therefore, for the Honourable Member, when he spoke a week ago, the Press attributed it to him, said that he was not coming because he was not coming to be cursed. He is now saying that he was not going to come but that it would have looked bad on the Opposition. Sir, the Honourable Member has to make up his mind about what he is telling the public, as to why he, too, has lost interest in the business of this Parliament and is hardly ever here.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address some issues in the Economic and Financial Statement, which relate to my Ministry. The Honourable Prime Minister has sought to deal in this Budget with the transactional cost to land. Sir, having reduced the Property Transfer Tax on land and having reduced land tax, we believe fundamentally that there are other areas that can be reduced. Sir, one of the other major costs associated with land transactions is legal cost.

Sir, rather than seeking to get into battles with persons, we have chosen to bring the land registration project to a closure by the end of the first decade.

H:No.049(96)540 p.m.

Tuesday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, that system already provides that any purchaser buying land under the land registration system would only pay one-third of the cost of the legal fees now paid and the vendor would only pay two-thirds of the fees now being paid. This project has gone on for twenty years across both administrations. The level of support has been sporadic over the years but we believe the time has now come for us to focus on this. Mr. Speaker, in Jamaica, you can get back title from the land registry for registered land within three weeks. We want to be able to move to the stage where the process for the conveyance of land becomes simplified and the cost to the Attorney becomes cheaper.

In addition, there are implications for financial institutions lending individuals money because the large part of the money that an individual spends in a land transaction is in commitment fees because invariably they are waiting on the lawyer and the title search et cetera. Mr. Speaker, therefore, I look forward to the UK land registry coming in and being able to advise us as to what has to be done so that Government can appropriately fund the process so that by 2010, we would have achieved the objective. In addition to that, I am happy to report that early in the new year, we would be bringing legislation to streamline the process for persons who do not have title deeds whether it is because the land has passed

to them seed to seed, in other words from generation to generation without deeds being given or whether it is because they have lost the title deeds or acquired title by what we call adverse possession where they have been living on a piece of land for ten to fifteen years but never paid any rent and the law recognises what is commonly known as squatter's right or the title to adverse possession. Of course, that depends on the owners not showing up and establishing legitimate title.

Mr. Speaker, the Economic Statement also speaks to introduction of new rules of the Supreme Court. One of the things we want to be able to do is to allow judges greater control over the management of the case flow such that cases languishing for five, six, seven or eight years in the court would become a thing of the past. Indeed, there has been work on those rules for the past eight years and we are in a position where we would be starting training of the Bar and Bench, systematically from next year. Sir, this is what this Government has been doing.

Sir, we have also said that in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, in the same way that Trinidad had a competitive advantage in relation to goods, we believe that Barbados would have a competitive advantage in relation to services. In that context, we feel that the Legal Profession Act needs to be reformed. We feel that we need to treat to issues that are of concern to the public such as discipline, advertising and better positioning themselves to export their services to the public. These are the issues we believe must engage this country in order for us to be able to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, we already have the report of Professor Patchett in relation of the recommendations for the Legal Profession Act, they have been passed to a committee being chaired by Mr. Leslie Haynes. In addition, we have circulated it to the Chief Justice, the University of the West Indies, the Dean of the Law Faculty, members of the Bar and the Public Library because of the limited availability of documents there.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak very briefly on the issue of the Halls of Justice. Sir, the Halls of Justice project is still going forward but the reality is that the bank which was given the tender in relation to the building of the Halls of Justice previously known as Caribbean Commercial Bank changed ownership this year. The Honourable Member for St. John is well aware of these facts. The Republic Bank of Trinidad & Tobago took over the ownership of Caribbean Commercial Bank from CLICO and the reality is that they requested time from us in order to be able to become familiar with the project and the issues because at the same time they were asked to produce for us, they were in fact also making serious changes not only to the name of the bank but to the structure.

We had a meeting with them last month and we left them with no doubt that we expect the process to move forward with greater expedition, that they had six months to settle themselves. I am told that the working drawings are now finished but we still have not got a final detailed cost on the project and this is needed in order for us to sign the implementation agreement such that construction can proceed at a pace. They are going back out to tender because the ones they had are now expired.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to let the public know where we are on the project but I anticipate that we would be in a position by the end of January to sign the implementation agreement and hopefully early in the new year, construction will start on the project.

Mr. Speaker, there were two unwarranted attacks in the last two weeks on the Royal Barbados Police

Force which I feel I have a duty to respond to as the Minister responsible for the police. We call on the police to protect us in times of trouble and when we believe they are going to be breeches of the law but when the police are attacked politically, I feel we have a duty to also rise to their defense across both sides of the aisle.

Therefore, it came as a shock to me that one of the attacks would have come from the other side of the aisle and that the Honourable Member for St. John is reported to have said that the police in this country are carrying out searches on houses of Members of Parliament and on houses of members of the Pan African Commission. If that newspaper report is wrong, I would allow the Honourable Member for St. John to get up and correct me. Sir, if the report is correct, it is a most unfortunate slur. I have not seen him come out to quarrel with the correction that the police made. The police came out last week and denied that they have carried out searches on the house of any Member of Parliament in this country or any house of members of the Pan African Commission.

Mr. Speaker, it cannot be that for the purposes of political gain that slurs are made on law enforcement officers or institutions in this country that we rely upon to keep this country stable and sound. Sir, the Honourable Member knows better than me that there has been no search of the House of any Member of Parliament. I do not get involved in the operational details of the Force but I have cause to accept the report of the police when they tell me that it is not true.

Mr. Speaker, I can only say that the Honourable Member needs to correct it because the police believe the allegation was made against them and they feel that the imputation is made that Barbados is a police state, that the rights of people are being trampled upon and that the civil liberties are being trifled with and this is reason why I understand they were moved to make a statement.

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member wants to speak to this issue, I am prepared to take my seat and let him speak to it because he knows that there is no member....

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East cannot draw me into making any statement. I do not believe that parliamentary privilege should cover me and that is why when I make statements, I make them outside of this Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, what is your point of order.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, you ask me to get up but are you now asking what is my point of order?

H49/5:

50 p.m.

Sequence 97

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, I stand by what I said in here and outside of here.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, that is enough then.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, since I do not know what it is and he refuses to clarify, I must assume that the record in the paper was correct. Sir, I say to you that the Honourable Member knows that no Member's house was searched.

Mr. Speaker, what is even worse is that the Honourable Member who has never been the subject of a search in the last year by the Royal Barbados Police Force was not being searched at his house but the search was carried out at a dance hall fete, a Dub at the Pent- house. Sir, I can sit and let the Honourable Member for St. John tell the Honourable House the full facts but I am not saying it because I am not getting into that.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, instead of that...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

I feel that there must be a higher standard on the part of people who want to serve public office.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Order, please.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I told the Honourable Member for St. John that I do not start fights. I know how to finish them and he knows that from 10 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I am wounded but living and fighting and I will go down only...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of public behaviour...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please. The Honourable Member for St. John, I am just asking you to control yourself, please. The Honourable Member has one minute to conclude.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that one minute I will make the point that it must be a higher standard demanded of people in public life than to come and make spurious claims and attacks on institutions that we depend on to govern this country. Sir, the Honourable Member does so in circumstances where he has personal knowledge that ought to take him off that path.

Sir, I also want to say that there was also an unfortunate attack on the police when a senior journalist in this country could read a letter that was anonymous. Even if the letter were ever to be believed to be true, the act of reading it on the news, in fact, not only defamed the conduct of those present in my view but also led to the unfortunate situation where those people's lives would be in danger.

Sir, I believe that where anonymous letters are, in those instances, handed to members of the community that they have a duty to carry them to the Commissioner of Police because they may be security issues involving the liberty or life of persons. I believe that all right thinking Barbadians can accept that.

Mr. Speaker, I have chosen in the last few minutes of this debate to treat to those two issues which were not directly germane to the Budget but which, in fact, were tangentially brought into issue during the course of the debate.

I believe that the Prime Minister has brought a statement here that is reflective of the challenges that we face; that it is cognizant that Government alone cannot do it and that it is a clarion call to all Barbadians that we need to rise to the occasion and produce in circumstances that would make our country more competitive; in circumstances that would allow us to treat to ensuring that we will not suffer or go down in the challenges that face us internationally, regionally or domestically.

Mr. Speaker, it is a crying shame that the Opposition can come to this debate and yet again not seek to engage. Ten years ago when the Barbados Labour Party was last in Opposition and the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter was responding to the Budget, he did not come in here to cast slurs on people's character. Sir, the Honourable Member put before this Parliament and the people of this country a ten-point plan for job creation. We have held faithful to that ten-point plan whether it was renewing

economic growth, having reform of the financial sector, imaginative capital works programme, stimulating support for small and medium-term enterprises. Mr. Speaker, I can go on and list all ten points. What were the results?

Mr. Speaker, when the Honourable Member for St. Peter gave that speech the unemployment in Barbados was 24.5 per cent. Sir, today it is less than 10 per cent. Therefore, when I speak of an Opposition rising to the occasion of a debate and treating a country with the seriousness with which it is expected be treated it, engaging and putting alternative plans, I speak not out of desire but I speak from the records of this country and from the performance of the Barbados Labour Party in an Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to stand in this Chamber this afternoon and salute the Right Honourable Prime Minister for his presentation in here on Tuesday. It is ten years that the Right Honourable Prime Minister and the Barbados Labour Party managed the affairs of this country and the affairs have been managed very well.

Sir, I heard comments coming from the Opposition about the Prime Minister being affable and a politician but that the Prime Minister is not a leader. Mr. Speaker, here is a man who led this country in 1994 to victory by a massive margin. In 1999 the same Prime Minister led the country to a grand victory and again in 2003 he won another term in office, not by the margin of victory as before but, nonetheless, he was able to continue in his positive and talented way to make sure that he led the Barbados Labour Party to power again.

Mr. Speaker, the people in Barbados are happy and satisfied with the leadership of this country by the Honourable Member for St. Peter. I support the Honourable Member for St. Peter as the Leader of this Party and, Sir, there is only one leader of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, Honourable Members on the other side cannot say that. Sir, the Honourable Members on this side form a strong chain and on the other side there are seven 'popping' rubber bands.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is being threatened, running scared and he would leave no stone unturned to make himself look good in the eyes of the members of the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, that is where his fight is, among the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John said, "I am ready for what the people of Barbados want me to do or the people of the Democratic Labour Party want me to do". Sir, that is what the Honourable Member for St. John said and that is worrying the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

H49/6:

00 p.m.

Sequence 98

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 99, 6:
00, p.m.

Continuation of Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, enough of that and I will get back to him and I am quite sure when I finish, Sir, he will never see me and speak to me again. I do not want him to speak to me.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that we, in this country have to position ourselves for the future and there are going to be hard times. The Prime Minister also said that we had ten good years and we are in for some rough times and we have to prepare ourselves for those times.

Sir, this country has been lucky so far. We had three hurricanes in the Caribbean this year. Trinidad and Dominica have experienced earthquakes. We had some flood waters in Barbados, and some would lead us to believe that it is the fault of the Barbados Labour Party that we had flooding.

Mr. Speaker, we will not always have it so good and the Prime Minister asked us to prepare yourselves. Sir, he keeps saying that in the future what is going to be very important to Barbadians is the level of service that we give. Therefore, we have to put ourselves in the position to make sure that when we go out there, we offer good service.

Barbados is not the only place in the world offering tourism. There are other countries greater than ours and lesser than ours, but they are all vying for the same tourism dollar. We cannot boast about sun, sand and sea anymore. We have to work like any country that wants to be successful. Whatever we are doing, be it in the services sector, tourism in our own country, we have to give a high level of service.

The late Sir Arthur Lewis wrote in one of his books that when you go into the big international countries like Europe, and North America and you go into a store, people come to the door and greet you, regardless of your colour, "Good Morning, Sir or Good Morning, Mam, how can I be of service to you?" But in the Caribbean, when you go to a place for service, you come out and they ask you, "Wa Ya Want?"

Sir, we have to change our attitudes and I am happy to see that we, as the Prime Minister said, cannot do it alone. We have to depend on the private sector and the unions. I heard the other day Sir Roy Trotman of the union make mention of the fact that you are entitled to good benefits but you have to give good service and give back to the company and this is where we should be at this time.

Mr. Speaker, the other matter I want to touch on relates to the upcoming World Cup in 2007 which Barbados has been so fortunate to host the finals. We are now being positioned in the world, Sir, where everyone in the whole world now, since cricket is an international game, is going to be talking about Barbados. We have to get ourselves ready, be it in what services we are going to offer be it, tourism, roads and Kensington Oval.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that the issue of moving the people from Pickwick Gap has come to a head. I heard the Minister say that they are going to be relocated to Barbarees Hill area, close to the Medford Mahogany business.

Mr. Speaker, when those people are relocated, I would like to know if they will be encouraged to act as small business people, where they can offer a bed and breakfast accommodation for some of the people who are coming here for the World Cup. I heard that the existing hotels are not enough to accommodate these persons.

I am quite sure that the Honourable Member for the City, their able representative, would be in agreement with this to make sure that those people are in a position to make some kind of living for themselves. They have given up a lot and I believe that in some way, they should be compensated.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Democratic Labour Party is after the Government of Barbados. They are seeking the reigns of power and they are doing so at any cost whatsoever. They are going around the country at night keeping a lot of noise under the street lights, and preventing the people from sleeping. I think they should be arrested for disturbing the peace.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Sir, the unemployment figures show that people are working and when they go home after a hard day's work, they ought to be able to sleep in peace.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

There are Honourable Members 'bussing in' people at night to attend meetings. They are after the Government and they are going about it in a way which backfired on them the last time.

Sir, they are giving the people of this country the impression that the Honourable Members of the Barbados Labour Party are corrupting people and they are there to steal the laces from Jesus' boots. The people in Barbados have confidence in this Government and to date, they are still showing that confidence.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Sir, night after night, you can hear people talking about this person's bank account has in so much money. These are malicious people who are peeping into people's accounts. They could well peep

under themselves.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of Opposition you have who are doing as they like and tarnishing people's characters.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is feeling the pressure within the Democratic Labour Party. It is there. He heard the Honourable Member for St. John say that he is willing and ready to do what the people in the Democratic Labour Party want him to do, and what the people in Barbados want him to do, he is ready.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West cannot be too comfortable because he is under pressure. He feels that the people in the Party are with him. Sir, he told me that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is with him now and apologised to him, and that is why I was surprised at how he got in here yesterday afternoon and cast aspersions on my character. I will talk to him about that matter.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of us in here come from humble surroundings. We went to school, some of us went to university, some got one and two degrees, others like me did not get one, but I am a self-made man in this country. I did not come to politics looking for anything, Mr. Speaker, when I came in here, I was a man with property. I starting working at 17 years old and worked hard in this country and what I have achieved, is from sheer dint of hard work and sweat.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to apologise for my success. I do not have to apologise for my flamboyancy.

House 049, sequence 6:00, 181014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

I do not apologise for my good looks. Mr. Speaker, sometimes in life there are situations where because of your good looks you would get through. That is a fact. Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I have no apologies to make about my success. Mr. Speaker, as a young man in this country the first car I brought I paid \$900 for it, a Volkswagen. In 1968 I was paying the Bank of Nova Scotia \$63 a month for the same car. Sir, when I got married in 1971 I was working for \$350 a month and I bought a brand-new car, a Morris 1300 for \$4 206 from Fort Royal Garage, from Leroy Alleyne's

father and I paid the Bank of Nova Scotia \$125 per month for the car. I did not steal anything. I work hard for what I got and I am proud.

I am speaking to you, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. I went into the insurance industry in 1976. I remember that so well, it seems like it was just yesterday. It is the same year my daughter was born. She is 28 years old and she just gave me a granddaughter.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

The Honourable Member for St. James Central is saying that is his neighbour. That is all he would be, neighbour.

Mr. Speaker, you work hard and you build. I remember building my first house in Frere Pilgrim in 1983. In 1987 I sold it and made a profit. In 1987, I built my first set of apartments in Husbands. In 1989, I bought Frere Pilgrim. During the time I was in the insurance industry I invested in a property at Belleville. In a year's time I made \$40 000 in profit on it and I took that money and built a pool to my house. I have no apologies for my success. I work hard.

Sir, I tell all of my children that they have to go to a university and they have to work because they may not be lucky like me to get by and that this is a very competitive world they are living in. I sent my son to Waterloo University in Canada between 1990 to 1994 for four years to study environmental science. My daughter went to the University of the West Indies Cave Hill in 1998 under the guidance of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South. She got a first class honours degree in accounting. When people were taking 12 years to get the ACCA designation, she did it in 18 months. My son is now at the Barbados Community College doing law with the Honourable Member for Christ Church East's daughter. The numbers in the class are high and the University of the West Indies Cave Hill only takes in 10 or 12 law students from Barbados a year. I told him that if he does not get into the Cave Hill campus, I am going to send him to Kent University or Warwick University in England to do law. I have to take care of my children.

Sir, all I am saying is that I am appalled at how the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West got in here and spoke about my character and about this and that about me, when he has not been successful in anything he has done. He has not been successful in anything at all. Yet he is going to walk about this country... He got in here on Tuesday laughing in my face and yesterday he got in here insinuating about me and a Transport Board and driving a Mercedes Benz. The key is here, if he wants to drive it, he can drive it. The Mercedes Benz is out there in the yard, he can go and drive it. He drives a little grey car MZ 513, the same kind as the Benz. It is not his money. He borrowed money from Parliament to put in it, but the down payment is not his money, it is part of the earnings of Bobby Thomas. He knows that. I could tell him that.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member, please. Honourable Member, I am suggesting that you control yourself. I believe that we have had enough of that now. You have made the point you wanted to make and I am suggesting that we move on now.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, when one espouses leadership, one has to come clean. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West saying in here that he does not have to come to politics to be a Prime Minister. He spoke in here about his integrity and those kinds of things. I cannot see how the Honourable Members on that side could sit back and allow him to be a Prime Minister. First, the people of Barbados got to vote for them and that is impossible.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West went on a platform and said that as a boy he used to shoplift. He said that. He said on a platform that as a boy he used to go into stores and pop little things and carry them away and his mother would beat him. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West said on a political platform that he used to shoplift, so how could he tell me that he wants to be a leader of this country and has those kinds of qualities. This is not that kind of country, Mr. Speaker. This is a country that when you are talking about leadership, you have to come clean.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me to say what I had to say in here, but let the Honourable Member know that I have worked hard for what I have achieved and I will continue to work hard.

The Honourable Member got in here and spoke about people's houses. The Honourable Member got in here insinuating about the Honourable Member for St. Michael South and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and about houses. These are people who worked hard. They are not parasites. They do not live off the people. They work hard and pay their mortgages.

I want to let them know in here that whenever elections are called I will be a candidate. They are positions in St. Michael that are vacant. I will be a candidate, Mr. Speaker, even if it is in St. Michael North West, and I will leave no stone unturned to make sure that he is not returned. The Honourable Member for St. John would make sure that he is not at the helm. They are all working on it.

Mr. Speaker, leadership is about leading by example, about service to a country, to your people and to your family. If tomorrow someone in my family was sick and needed help, be it my mother, my father, an aunt or a cousin and they were going senile I would not allow them to walk about the road cursing and begging and doing all kinds of things, I would try to put them in some kind of home. That is what I would do. Sir, it is about having a clean record. It is about consensus building.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, let me say here now that this has really reached a point where I would have to join this debate.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Make your point of order, please.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

It is known that my mother suffers from Alzheimer and I would only hope that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central is not referring to my mother. In all fairness I would only hope that he is not referring to my mother. He could cuss anybody else but when it comes to my mother, he

better not go there. House 049 Sequence 100

6:20 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Mr. SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, you have made your point of order.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I will stress again that leadership is about example; about leading by example; about service to one's country; about consensus- building; about a clean record and not about having a record about shoplifting.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that those people who are listening to this debate, can go to their radios; those who are watching television can put their hands on the television screens; the people who are driving in their motorcars can put their right hand on their heart and pray for this country.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Honourable Members, order please. I have to say something here. I am sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has left his seat but it is unfortunate that this debate has taken this turn. As Speaker and Presiding Officer, I have to admit that I did preside over the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and in that speech, certain insinuations were made.

I thought it was only fair that Honourable Members would want to defend themselves but I think that we have had enough of that and I am not going to allow anymore of it. I suggest to the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central that he still has a few minutes left, and would need to lift the whole tone of the debate.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

I am asking the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to be silent when I am speaking. I am suggesting that let us try to get back to the level of behaviour and respect which we have always had in this Honourable House.

As I said, I think that the whole question of insinuations has gone too far and, therefore, I am calling for a halt to it. Honourable Members have always respected each other and there is no need for us to continue with that. Please, I will not allow anymore of that. Honourable Member, do you wish to continue?

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to this Honourable House that my remarks were not directed to any Honourable Member's mother or family.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Thank you for saying that.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my closing, it is all about example; about service to one's country and to one's family; it is about a clean record in life and about consensus-building.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would hope that those persons listening to this presentation, be it on the radio, television, car, going home from work or from any other place of interest, that they would put their hands on the television, the radio, or their hearts, and pray that this country would never, ever, fall into the hands of leadership, under the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend my support to the Economic and Financial Policies which were enunciated by the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter on Tuesday last. Sir, I want to urge also all Honourable Members in this Chamber, to give their support as well.

Mr. Speaker, there will be outbursts from time to time in this Honourable Chamber but for the most part, we have come here, very seriously and soberly, to debate the people's business.

Mr. Speaker, I have not heard anything from Honourable Members on the Other Side who have spoken so far, which would suggest to me that they are opposing any of the measures which have been advanced by the Right Honourable Minister of Finance.

Sir, in due course, tonight we will come to the vote. The choice is theirs. They may oppose for the sake of opposing or they may bring some critical support - and I have to say that is what I have been hearing so far, coming from those speeches - to these Economic and Financial Policies.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members on the Other Side and, indeed, some on this side of the House, as you would expect in a debate of this kind, have chosen to highlight a number of issues, which are not peculiar to Barbados but are universal. Sir, there are a number of issues which will dog and bedevil the development process, no matter what one does.

Mr. Speaker, none of the issues which the Honourable Members of the Opposition have raised in the course of this debate are neither new nor unknown to the Government. Sir, I must say too that neither is the Government indifferent to any of those issues. We struggle with them everyday. The Honourable Members on the Other Side, some of them who have been in Government in their time, know what that struggle is on a daily basis, sometimes into the night.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados is not alone in this regard. We are what is described as a more developing country and there are many areas where we exhibit the profile of that of a developed country, particularly so in the social sectors. There is no Honourable Member on the Other Side who is not proud of that. That is one of the hallmarks of Barbados. Wherever one goes, one reads about it in

journals, in textbooks, in reports; one reads this reference to Barbados and the large investments, which successive administrations in this country have made. We have made this to be our business, that the social sectors are, in themselves productive sectors, as I constantly make the point in this Honourable House. We do not apologise for the success that we have made over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish that sometimes when persons in Barbados are surfing the Internet or when travelling to other countries that they would read newspapers from other countries. One would see that whether it is in North Africa, Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom or other parts of the European Union, Africa, Latin America, or in the Far East, the problems are the same.

Mr. Speaker, I am amazed when I look at it in a global context because there are the same problems that are affecting persons.

H:No.049(101)630 p.m.

Tuesday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

The United Kingdom just made a decision that they would raise bus fares and other transport fares but we have chosen in Barbados not to do so. Education fees everywhere in the world that I am aware of are on the increase both in developed and developing countries but we have chosen otherwise in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I constantly say that life is about choice and change and that these are the choices that we have consciously and deliberately made. Mr. Speaker, you can count on one hand and still have fingers left over where education is free at the point of delivery at the primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary level. Sir, even in the so-called socialist countries, it was never free in the way that it was in Barbados. This is the heroic effort that taxpayers in this country make because students do not pay for it. Sir, somebody has to pay for it because, as they say, there is no free lunch. It is free at point of delivery to that generation because it is the human resource base that we are building that will inform and underpin the services economy that we are seeking to build in this 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Health quite rightly made the point earlier today that health care is free at point of delivery at primary, secondary and tertiary level and that if we do not have the service in Barbados, the taxpayers will pay to send you abroad to get whatever is required. Happily, this happens less and less frequently now as more and more services are available in this country.

Sir, we need to put ourselves in the right context. In this blessed little Barbados we are going to continue to face the challenges because we have always done that from the day this island was settled. Sir, whoever is the Government, the private sector and the trade unions in this country will continue to fight to sustain and advance the development process in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, as a nation, we have made choices and they have been supported through successive administrations in this country.

The Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central when he made his contribution earlier

clearly gave his support to the provision of the \$1.5 million to increase the availability of preschool education in this country with and additional 550 places in 2005 and over a three-year period, 1 650 places. At a time when other countries are increasing to their students the cost of education, in Barbados we are bringing an entirely new age cohort, the three to five years olds, to free education. Sir, these are the choices we have made.

Mr. Speaker, we have chosen services as the way forward for Barbados in the 21st century. Of course, tourism is the best known of these services and I hope it is the best understood. People are getting to understand more and more that tourism is a far more complex industry than we think. It is part of what should probably be called the hospitality industry which drives our economy.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have chosen to have the best road network in this region and possibly, in Latin America and the Caribbean but this does not mean that from time to time and at any particular time in Barbados that there are not roads which have to be repaired because that is true anywhere in the world.

Sir, years ago I remember Mr. Harold Hoyte writing an article in the Nation News to say that he was driving or being driven in Manhattan and dropped into a pot hole that was so deep that they had to put on the headlight of the car to get out of it. Sir, this happens everywhere in the world and it is a fact that we have the best road network in this region.

Sir, we are still building new roads while we are doing all of this. We are rebuilding old roads from the roadbed up and Barbadians are beginning to understand this process now. This is now coming to closure at Martindale's Road and we saw it at Culloden Road. We cannot always resurface because these roads are ancient and not built to carry today's traffic.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of today's traffic, we talk about congestion but we cannot have it both ways because everybody wants to have a motor car and some people want two or three cars. Sir, neither in the developing world nor in the developed world, no one foresaw the advent of the reconditioned Japanese cars. In every country of the world, it has put Authorities of Public Transport in a tailspin and countries have dealt with it in various ways. We have tried to deal with it through successive administrations in this country so as to say no to anyone who wants a motorcar. Sir, you cannot eat your cake and also have it in your hand.

Sir, in some of these roads, we have had to go down to the road bed many feet down and rebuild to come to the surface of the road so that it can serve Barbados for ten or fifteen years. Sir, concrete roads would make good sense because we have a cement factory so this is not something I am guessing at. I know it would work because I have studied it carefully and I have seen it work before in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, people would say straight off that concrete roads cost three times as much at the beginning but they indulge in false economy because it will serve for 20 or 25 years without having to repair it.

I know that this is so because in the City of Bridgetown, over the years, I have been able to persuade Ministers of Public Works to pave streets in the constituency that I am privileged to represent with concrete. This goes back to the 1970s and the Minister of Public Works has never had to repair them. Sir, some of them are pristine because people are proud of them and keep them clean themselves. Sir, the people who live in Santa Domingo Alley clean their streets. Some of these roads are now 25 years old and they have stood the test of time.

Mr. Speaker, in so many ways we have chosen to improve the quality of live of all our people. Some Honourable Members of this Parliament take it for granted when Honourable Members on this side from time to time during the course of last night and today made the point that many more people, as a result of this economic and financial package, are coming off the tax role. Sir, this is not a small thing because those who are the beneficiaries of it, who wake up and discover that they are not on the tax role anymore, it is a big moment in their lives. I hear glib references coming from the other side to this as though it is nothing.

H49/6:

40 p.m.

Sequence 102

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about choices but I have made the point that life is not only about choice, it is about change and we are changing every day. There are medical doctors on both sides of this Chamber and they would bear me out when I say that from moment to moment we are not the same. We are changing every minute.

Sir, we are aging every minute and changing in soul in many different ways. This earth from moment to moment is never the same. Some people care not to notice it but there are others who do and understand.

Sir, the way of the world in so many other aspects is changing and changing more rapidly than they did a generation ago. The reality is, we must adjust if we are going to become more competitive in this economy, and we must, because that is the way of the world in these early years of the 21st century.

Sir, we do not know what it will be like in 2050. We can speak to what it is today. You have to be competitive and to be competitive it means that you have to be at the top of your game and sometimes beyond excellence. We have to be prepared to work harder.

Sir, my father used to say that if you want to be better than the other fellow, you have to be prepared to work harder and longer than the other fellow, then you do not have to envy anyone.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be prepared to be more creative, more confident and engage heart and hand in the national effort. I want to support the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE). Sir, courtesy is the cheapest thing going in the marketplace today. It cost you nothing to say good morning and how are you today. It disarms people.

Mr. Speaker, on one of the occasion when one of the Princes of England was visiting Barbados, a little ordinary salt of the earth lovely Christian Barbadian lady went up to the Prince and said to him, "How is your mother?" The Prince was disarmed. She did not get into the salutation of Her Majesty. She was

just an ordinary old lady.

Sir, there are some things that do not change, for example, love, integrity and courtesy. Courtesy does not cost anything and you can lavish it on people. Sir, you can be a billionaire in courtesy if you want to be. Mr. Speaker, when the old lady asked how was the Prince's mother, the Prince could only respond that she was well.

Sir, this little old lady is, perhaps, leading the way that we need to be going because at the end of the day the Government can only create and provide what is known as an enabling environment for the productive sectors of our economy because there are firms, individuals with small and medium-size enterprises who trade, not Governments. I repeat that Government can only do the best that it can to create an enabling environment and that starts with health, education, training and housing before you get to the job marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, let us not be too dismissive about the question of unemployment now in single figures in Barbados. Technically speaking, that is virtually full employment in a country where employment is seasonal.

Sir, all of these cars on the road do not mean that people are driving aimlessly about. These people are going to work and this is one matter that was raised by the Right Honourable Prime Minister in his speech that we have to look and understand new ways how work and business are carried out in this country. We have to bring new thinking to it.

Sir, I am very happy to say that Barbados has already established its reputation everywhere in the world for excellence. Mr. speaker, whatever you may think of the West Indies cricket team today, nobody on the face of this planet can take the excellence of the Right Excellent Sir Garfield Sobers from us. That is where the bar has been set in cricket. I wish that it could be so in football but maybe one day this would happen.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago we celebrated 350 years of manufacturing rum in this country. We have the best rum in the world and there is no argument about it. It is the best received gift by any visitor who comes to Barbados and it is the best received gift that you can take outside of Barbados to anybody.

Mr. Speaker, the late Sir Jack Dear was attending a tourism meeting in Singapore many years ago and he asked the waiter at the end of the meal, "do you have any BICO ice cream?" Of course, the man in Singapore had never heard of Barbados furthermore BICO. The point was made to the waiter that he was lacking in his menu because BICO ice cream is the best in the world.

Sir, do we know how much we export? Barbados really needs to know a little bit about what is the reputation of Barbados. I am talking about world-class reputation for excellence in these areas. There is no beach anywhere in the world that can compete with ours.

Sir, even within CARICOM people ask how is that you get your Cabinet to work in such a way? How do you get your Parliament to work in this way? Sir, what is going on here in this Parliament here over these three days you sometimes have to search hard and long to find it in some of our sister countries and we must not take these things for granted.

Sir, the Barbados Drug Service is a model, not only in the developing world but in the developed world. I just posted a copy of the Act and Regulations to the IPTF in London at their request. Our HIV/AIDS programme is already a model and our education is now hundreds of years old, even before our time.

Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister made this point 'brand Barbados' many times in his presentation. There are some Ministers on this side who know that for many years I have been struggling with that idea. We have to brand Barbados so that when people see the name Barbados, no matter what product it is on, they know that it is an excellent product and a service. Sir, we have to burnish that brand Barbados to sustain it constantly and consistently improve and enhance it.

Sir, the Prime Minister pointed out what we have to examine our concept of what constitutes business and work in today's world. I have spoken at length on this.

H49/ 6:

50 p.m.

Sequence 103

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 104, 6:

50 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

I have lectured on this matter both at home and abroad. The kind of work, the way of work, the quality and quantity of work, and the attitude to work, are all changing. Already, we have people who do not work in a traditional workplace anymore. Some work from home and some of them work from their motor cars who are known as the road warriors. They work here and they are working in three other countries in the world, courtesy of the new technology.

The way in which people work and, Mr. Speaker, the social partnership, the trade unions, the private sector and the Government, must now all be at the cutting edge. People are going to work differently. People are going to work different shifts. People are going to work certain times of the year and not other times of the year. There are people who are going to choose to work in modules of time. People are coming newly to the marketplace, people are retiring, changing gear and coming back to the marketplace, all of this is happening already.

Mr. Speaker, some people see it coming and are planning accordingly. Some people chose to remain blind to these things but these are the political, economic and social realities of these first decades of the Twenty-first Century.

The social partnership, Mr. Speaker, belongs to us and we are entitled to be as critical of it as we wish, but it is unique in this region. It is possibly unique in the entire western hemisphere. It is a vital

component in the economic repositioning of Barbados and there are countries which would like to lay claim to it but cannot.

Sir, I had a British Cabinet minister say to me that we could not even begin to think about it in the United Kingdom, you would remember what Mrs. Thatcher did to the Trades Unions Movement. Sir, I had a CARICOM Cabinet Minister say to me that we could not get off the ground with it in my country, but it is vital to the economic repositioning of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, new technologies are making change more rapid and we have to move rapidly. Productivity has to increase in this country. This attitude, particularly in the public service that somehow you do not work on a Friday, it cannot work like this, if you are being paid to work on Friday, you have to work on Friday. The days have gone when Friday used to be pay day and you had to stand and wait and go somewhere to collect your pay. Now, people's money is paid into the bank and they must work.

Also, this attitude about this is not my job, this is for somebody else to do, has to stop in this country and people must be prepared to put their shoulder to the wheel, because productivity goes to it for all of us.

Sir, this idea, which is not peculiar to Barbados that in every Government Ministry, Government department, Statutory Corporation, Church, social club, private sector operation, and political party too, Sir, that it is a small hard core of people who do the work. We have to get beyond that and everybody must now do what they can to put us in the position where productivity must move up the scale.

We need to be exporting more goods and services and that is the only way I know that you are going to do it. This is not anything that anybody can do for us. This is what we have to do for ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, before I sit, I have to make reference to the City of Bridgetown. Sir, reference was made to the City of Bridgetown in the presentation of the Prime Minister. He made the point that central to this effort of branding Barbados so that it is a well ordered, well-developed society, which can meet the most exacting world standards, that central to this, is the full implementation of proposals, long in planning, I can testify to that, Sir, to redevelop and beautify our capital city, Bridgetown.

Sir, the redevelopment of Bridgetown is key to the branding of post modern Barbados. This is my vision for Barbados and what will happen in the City of Bridgetown is of the greatest importance. Bridgetown is now at the leading edge of high profiling the international image of Barbados. We are working on our heritage site. The Town Hall, I think is a wonderful example of restoration. There are many vending sites, which do not necessarily have to do with Cricket World Cup 2007. We embarked upon this long before the idea or the possibility that we would have been hosting the Finals in 2007, and people can see for themselves.

Queens Park was just refurbished. It will be enjoyed by thousands on Christmas morning. Work is going to start on the Lower Green in January 2005. I am pleased to say. I know where the money is, so I know when the work will start. The Boardwalk is to be extended. Fairchild Street Market will start up. The relocation plans for the vendors are virtually complete. Again, we know where the money is coming from, and as we refurbished the Cheapside Market, now it is the turn for Fairchild Street

Market. These are the places where Barbadians want to go in comfort and want to have access to everything that Barbados has to offer. It is the place where visitors to Barbados go as well.

I heard talk earlier in this debate about beach amenities at Silver Sands. I would let it be known that I also want some in the City of Bridgetown. Browns Beach is within the City of Bridgetown, the beach which runs pass the old gas works. Some Honourable Members in here are too young to know about the old gas works on Bay Street, just before the Esplanade going towards Bridgetown, there is great need there, and the Brandon Brighton Beach on the north side of the Bridgetown Port. The Minister of Housing and the Environment assures me that they will respond to what I am asking. Bridgetown, they say, is the only city in the world with two magnificent white sand beaches, one on one side of the City and one on the other side of the City.

Sir, I am hoping that in this entire process, and Bridgetown is like a centrepiece, there will also speak to more housing to replace substandard housing in the City of Bridgetown. The roads should be resurfaced because when all of what was going on around Bridgetown was under repair, the mini buses, big buses and all the heavy traffic were using all of the side roads that they could find to escape the repair process. Those roads are now in need of repair, and I have written to the relevant Minister and I have put my case before the Planning and Priorities Committee which is an executive committee of the Cabinet of this country in respect of those matters.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I think I would like to appeal, not only to Honourable Members in here but to every Barbadian to support the Economic and Financial Policies of the Government of Barbados, brought before this House by the Minister of Finance. I smile at those who talk about a Government that is tired and does not know what it is doing.

I well remember, Mr. Speaker, in 1971 after ten years in Government, the then Prime Minister of Barbados, now the late Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow made the point that he was so tired and exhausted that he needed to recharge his batteries.

House 049, sequence 104, 19:

0014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party believes because when they had ten years in Government and exhaustion and a lack of ideas overtook them, that it necessarily would apply on this side of the House, but that is far from the truth, Sir.

We have seen our Prime Minister take fresh guard and new ideas and new initiatives came so fast that Honourable Members on the other side of the House could not keep up with them. They are harping back to 1963. Today in this debate somebody went back to 1943, before I was even born.

We want to look to be taking Barbados forward, strong and confident into the future, taking all Barbadians with us according to this vision, these policies and these plans.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the matter before the House to all Honourable Members, and I am obliged of the opportunity to have spoken in this debate.

Thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 740 p.m. today.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 7:40 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

House 049 Sequence 105

7:02 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the Economic and Financial Policies that were delivered to this Parliament on Tuesday and to say from the outset that if there is one thing on which I must pay a compliment to the Right Honourable Prime Minister, that would be for his theoretical rhetorics.

Sir, as I was listening to the Prime Minister on my way to Parliament, I could not have faulted what he said were the problems with the economy of Barbados. I agree with him that this country needs to produce. I agree with him that we are consuming too much and not producing.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, I have written and have spoken that this country needs to punish consumption and reward production. Sir, when I heard the Right Honourable Prime Minister repeating those words, it reminded me of a column which was written by my friend, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, when he said that what was being said was 'Kellmanomics'.

Sir, I want to congratulate the Right Honourable Prime Minister for finally agreeing that what is needed in this country is for us to adopt 'kellmanomics', and to punish consumption and to reward

production.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this Government has been able to accumulate resources by selling banks, getting the private sector to sell off entities to foreign investors and by selling large tracts of land to foreigners to get reserves.

Mr. Speaker, I would have preferred that while we were doing those things that we would have increased the productive capacity of the country to have sustainable reserves to help build this country. I am saying that I think we have missed the boat this time around by not putting those policies in place, that would have increased the productive capacity of this country, while, at the same time, punishing consumption.

Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt and I have already said this to my party and to Government, which I will repeat. This Government was fortunate to have a policy left to it by the Democratic Labour Party, which was a taxation policy called VAT. Sir, I believe that if VAT was correctly implemented in this country, this Parliament would not today be complaining about the capacity to increase the productive sectors of the country.

Sir, this Parliament and this Government did not understand the policies of indirect taxation, neither did they understand the effects of indirect taxation when it is wrongly implemented.

Sir, I was very happy when the Prime Minister spoke about VAT. I thought that he was going to make the point that he has been able to watch the performance of VAT and the effects that it has created on the technocrats and on those persons who were involved in the service industry, and that we, as a people, have done things to that particular group of people that we should not have done.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the implementation of VAT has allowed items such as computers, refrigerators and a number of other appliances, to become accessible to people of Barbados, at such affordable prices that Barbadians purchased them. Therefore, the men and women who were able to employ themselves previously by servicing such equipment, were ignored and found themselves in a position where they were becoming unemployable because instead of people getting computers, refrigerators and the other appliances repaired, they were simply dumping them and purchasing more because of the affordability in the prices. Therefore, in the process, we have destroyed a large number of persons who would have normally serviced this equipment.

Mr. Speaker, whenever one refuses to repair a television set and instead purchased one, all that is happening is that somebody outside of Barbados would be employed. On the other hand, if the price is at the rate where it pays to have that television set repaired, work would be created for our people within Barbados and the economy of Barbados would be expanded.

Mr. Speaker, had we taken the bold step to abolish income tax and to increase VAT, the capacity of the working public would have been increased. They would have worked harder and longer. Instead we saw a situation where workers were saying that they were not going to work overtime anymore because when they work overtime and for a certain amount of money, they had to pay more tax.

Sir, we should never have a system of taxation in this country which frustrates production. There are

a group of persons who believe that if we keep taxes on the middle-class and the other groupings, that it would help them. That is not true. It means that if we were to reduce income tax from our workers of Barbados, it would encourage them to work more. Sir, those persons who believe that when income tax is reduced from them that the burden goes to somebody else and that it would affect that person, is not necessarily true. What it means is that we will be rewarding those persons who work and would be punishing those who consume, without regards to their brothers and sisters.

Mr. Speaker, all that is now happening is that we are delaying a process that is inflicting pain on the productive sectors of the country and employing persons from outside of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we have now gotten into a habit where we believe that we do not have to look after our brothers and sisters, and we have to stop being selfish. The only reason that the politicians want to continue with the direct system of taxation is that they want to continue the dependency syndrome where they believe that in keeping persons on the direct taxation system, every year the politicians could come and reduce the tax burden on people and people would thank them for reducing it.

Sir, that is not what we want. We want to build the productive capacity of the country, so that we can expand the economy of the country to help persons. Sir, this is very simple. If you go back to the recommendations of the Inter-American Development Bank who made the pronouncement on VAT, you would see that they had encouraged the country to go towards a one-tax system. We refused to allow that to happen and instead set about expanding our economy and looking after the interest of those persons in the services industry, who would normally service washing machines, refrigerators, electrical appliances, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, all we are doing now is encouraging persons to import more appliances into the country, thereby making large profits, while we are squeezing out a group of persons who could have helped in developing the economy of Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, Honourable Members.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that this debate is at a very high level and that there are some people who would not understand these points, who would need to listen instead of crossing when good advice is being given.

Mr. Speaker, we also have to understand that because of this, the more appliances that are repaired, the more persons who would be employed. It is very simple. The more persons that we could get to keep their appliances and to have them serviced, the more work we would have for the country.

H:No.049(106)750 p.m.

Tuesday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

If you have a replacement system, it means that you are creating work for people outside of Barbados and not for those people in Barbados. Sir, a good example of that is when people work in the sugar industry cutting canes. We were employing people, they had money to spend so more people were being employed because of those persons but when those persons were replaced by machines, the machines then had to be serviced so we were servicing the working capacity of people outside of Barbados and not in the country of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that we have to look after the expansion of our economy and not others. Sir, some time back I spoke about going on the foreign market as opposed to the local market because when we borrow on the foreign market, we are providing revenue for other countries to employ their people as opposed to our people especially at a time when we have liquidity.

Sir, we have to find a system whereby we expand our economy. One of the worst things we could do is to have a taxation system where you are running two types of taxes at the same time that conflict. This is like going to the petrol station and putting gasoline and diesel in the car at the same time.

I want to thank Honourable Members from the other side for making a valid point when they discussed the Project Oasis. The point was made by one Honourable Member that Project Oasis was able to take young people who were on 'the block', that were previously called the "voluntarily idle" by Tom Adams, and put back to work. Sir, this is an important point because the Honourable Member was saying that people wanted to work but instead of the Government of the day providing the opportunity for them to work, they branded them as the voluntarily idle and this Government, twenty years after, recognise the error created in the 1980s and came up with Project Oasis to put these people back to work. Those persons on 'the block' created a problem for Barbados because they were not using their productive capacity to expand the economy of Barbados. I want to congratulate the Government for recognising that it is better to bring people back to the production line than to keep them off. Sir, every single person who remains off the production line, interferes with the productive capacity of the country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for Christ Church East for making a vital point yesterday. He said that under his dictate between Barbados Community College, University of the West Indies and Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic they were able to move the enrolment from 7 000 to 13 000. I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for outdoing his predecessor in this particular Ministry because his predecessor was only able to take 2 500 from the unemployment role into training but the Honourable Member for Christ Church East was able to train 6 000 and this is why the unemployment figures look so good today.

Mr. Speaker, every person who is removed from 'the block' by Project Oasis is another person removed from the unemployment statistics. Sir, nobody can fault that conclusion because it is true.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order as well as a point of honour. Sir, I just want to make a correction. The figures I indicated represented the performance of this administration over the past ten years. I would not want to claim to have done in 15 months what was done over a period of ten years. He may,

therefore, want to know for completeness that I also make the comparison of what happened in the previous ten years. The Democratic Labour Party moved tertiary enrolment from 5 200 to 7 200 and in this administration, over ten years, we were able to almost double the tertiary enrolment but I do not want to take credit for all of it, Sir.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, he is saying that even though he accounted for 6 000, the only two Ministers only accounted for 2 800.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I like to insist on accuracy. I am making no such claim. I know the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is trying to be mischievous but should not seek to delve into the internal dynamics of this side because we work as a team. The bottom line is that the Barbados Labour Party, true to its commitment to expand tertiary education, has far out-performed and outstripped the paltry performance of the Democratic Labour Party in its ten years.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Sir, the Honourable Member is quite correct. This is why he was able to help us prove the point that the problems in the economy of Barbados did not occur in the early 90s but peaked at that time and corrective measures had to be put in place because those problems were created in the early 80s.

For example, I heard an argument today that the Democratic Labour Party said there were no gangs but, Sir, in the early 90s there were actual gangs. If you take 18 years from 1994, you would come to a wonderful conclusion and know when those persons were born and within what period. Sir, statistics would show that they were born during the period of the Barbados Labour Party and that they matured in Democratic Labour Party which created problems for the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, that is what was said in here today.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I really could not sit here and allow this Parliament to be associated with an Honourable Member implying that some of our young people are born criminals. I trust that the Honourable Member is not suggesting that and I urge him to rephrase the statement so that we can be all very clear on what it is he is trying to say about our young people.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I never said anybody was a born criminal. I said that the Barbados Labour Party said we had gangs in 1994. I said if we took the age of the persons they were speaking about you would see the type of economic climate in which they were born that would have created pressure and that they would have blossomed at a certain point in time.

Sir, nobody can now question what happened in the early 90s. In the early 90s we found a situation where the debt left by the Barbados Labour Party had to be repaid. We had a situation where all the growth created by us had to be used to pay off their loans. We also had a situation, through their own admission, that there was a climate where, because of using the term "voluntary idle" that they created a particular atmosphere in this country that interfered with the productive capacity of persons in this country. I have also said that there is a solution to it and that we should solve it because we cannot

continue to have our people not producing in this country.

H49/8:

00 p.m.

Sequence 107

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Sir, we have to understand that every person out of work is a person who is capable of doing something that would help develop the country. Therefore, we have to try to get them back on the production line.

We cannot afford to have a situation in this country where we change the way we calculate unemployment figures to reflect that Barbadians are employed. However, if you go on the 'block' you would discover that the system that is being used to give Barbadians the impression that we do not have an unemployment problem is incorrect and the statistics do include those persons on the 'block'.

Sir, we have to understand that we have a serious problem in our transport system. The Government is saying that we need to spend \$100 million on fly-overs. We have to ask ourselves, even though I suggested in this Parliament that fly-overs might be the way to go, whether we should see that as the first or last option.

I believe that at times when we have so many primary and secondary roads in Barbados in disrepair, especially in the north of this island, we need to do a feasibility study to see what would create the most development for this country. We also have to look at other options.

Sir, it is clear that we need to be able to move more people earlier in the day to avoid the problem with traffic on the road around 8 o'clock in the morning. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to make a proposal that a feasibility study should be done and I am sure the Minister would accept.

Sir, for example, if a ZR can carry 14 and a mini bus can carry 21, it makes more sense to allow the owner of the ZR van to upgrade his vehicle to a mini bus. If all the owners of ZR vans are allowed to do this, and the mini buses to be upgraded to the buses the size of those of the Transport Board, it means that you would double the number of people who are moving between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. Mr. Deputy Speaker, all you would have to do is to encourage the public to leave home earlier in the morning. Therefore, you will not only be moving with the same number of vehicles between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. but you will be increasing your capacity by 100 per cent. Sir, if this is done, it means that we will have less people between the hours of 8:00 and 9:00 o'clock on the roads and we will not have the problems at the roundabouts on the roads.

Sir, it also means that we would now have \$100 million to spend on tenantry roads that need to be repaired or built. Instead of discounting what I am saying, I am asking you to implement what I said

before spending an additional \$100 million after having spent \$600 millions on roads, as stated by the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, There are 30 constituencies and I am asking the Minister to ensure that all constituencies get a fair share of the distribution of roads. I am not asking that you take from one constituency and give to another. I am asking that we too in the north of the island would like a share of the \$600 million that has been spent on the roads in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that if we were to implement what I said, we would not have a transportation problem in the north of the country. Sir, the people of St. Peter and St. Lucy are suffering for improved transportation.

Sir, there is a person in the bus stand who regulates the buses that go to St. Peter, St. Lucy and St. Andrew. This person tells the commuters that he is only interested in St. Andrew and not Peter or St. Lucy. I am saying that civil servants should not get involved in this type of behaviour because it interferes with commuters from my constituency who have to get to work and home. Mr. Speaker, we need to look at this situation.

Sir, some people believe that because they have authority that they can flex their muscles on persons. The public transport is for everyone in Barbados and all we are asking is that everyone be treated fairly.

Sir, over three years ago, I came back from a trip overseas and told this Parliament not to reduce the production of sugar cane in this country because of some information I received. The information was that the oil producing countries had agreed that payment for their oil should be made in Euro.

Sir, anybody who understood the effect of that would know that once the oil producing countries are being paid in Euros that it would strengthen the currency. Once the Euro currency was strengthened, the money that we got for our sugar would also increase. Sir, the evidence is here to support that.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Government bragging about the increase in revenue received from sugar but this is because of the increase in the Euro currency. Sir, if we had maintained our capacity to produce sugar, our foreign reserves and revenues for sugar would have been higher. Sir, we need to put someone in the Central Bank of Barbados who would study the movement of currencies. We cannot continue to hold our foreign reserves in one particular currency but we must play with our foreign reserves. The same way that we borrow money and changes in currencies would affect the repayments, we also have to hold the right currency to make sure that we maximise profits.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that China is going to be the dominant force in this forum and the Central Bank should be sending some of their officers to China to observe how they are trading so that we can have an advantage over the other countries in the world. We have to position ourselves to make sure that whenever something happens that we are able to benefit from it.

I am also saying that we have to understand that the talk about minimum wage is foolishness. Sir, the minimum wage allows the employer to pay the minimum wage and use the legal excuse not to pay anything more. I am saying that we as a Parliament should be discussing the maximum amount that an employer can pay a worker. There are negotiations between the employer and employee but once there

is a minimum wage involved, most employers will go towards the minimum wage and not the maximum wage. Therefore, we need a maximum wage instead of a minimum wage.

Sir, I will not support any minimum wage legislation that comes to this Parliament. I am saying that minimum wage legislation will work in the interest of the employer and not the employee.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Honourable Members, please.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

On a point of order. Sir, I do not think that I can sit here and allow the Honourable Member for St. Lucy to get away with that. Mr. Speaker, to suggest that if a minimum wage system is instituted that employers could use that minimum wage as something different and treat it as maximum wage and get away with it. Sir, that is implicit in that statement. Also implicit in that statement is that the unions at the time of the establishment of the minimum wage system, is that the unions will vanish and they will not be around to ensure that proper bargaining procedures are followed to ensure that workers get a fair wage or settlement.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I am very glad that the Honourable Member is not the Minister of Labour.

H49/ 8:

10 p.m.

Sequence 108

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 109, 8:

10 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South would know that minimum wages do not apply to union negotiations. I do not understand why he would bring the argument that any contract formed between a union is normally above the minimum wage, and what is tied in that is normally above the minimum wage.

Therefore, the Honourable Member needs to understand that the minimum wage comes in when there is no contract between the union. Sir, I would say that the union cannot go under, but there is nothing to stop the union from going over. Most people who benefit from minimum wages legislation are the persons who are not represented by unions.

There are hardly any unions in Barbados, Sir, that would allow anybody to negotiate on the minimum wage, so do not bring in the union on this matter. This is for those persons who are not represented by the unions, such as maids and shop assistants, et cetera.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, for three years, I have been begging this Government to understand that there is a difference between site value and improved value. I want the public to know that for three years, they have over paid their land taxes and the Government has to say something about that, for the simple reason that if I had not been consistent - and they are always quarreling with me saying that I have been repeating myself, but I have been consistent on this particular point - it would not be evidenced now, Sir, that thousands of Barbadians have been able to gain because of the Kelly Amendment.

I want to thank the Government for implementing it but I also want them to recognise that when I asked for it, there should be some correction of the date of the passing of the legislation, and some retroactive amendments made, so that the poor people will not suffer.

Sir, my last point is on pensions. I heard Honourable Members clapping for 28 cents a day but I cannot clap for this because I made another suggestion on this Floor of the House that has not been acted upon. I said that in this House the same way people working for \$15 000 and less pay VAT that the pensioners also pay VAT. I want the same tax credit for the pensioners, as those people working for \$15 000 or less. I believe that those pensioners worked hard in this country, and they should not be subjected to VAT, the same way as the people working for under \$15 000 were not subjected to the VAT.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Mr. Speaker, first let me thank you for this opportunity. As is customary, let me also thank the good people of St. Michael South, who sent me to this Chamber to represent their interest.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly is not an enviable position to be speaking at the end of a debate, just before the wrap up by the Minister of Finance and everyone would have stated almost everything that there is to say, regarding this presentation and these Financial and Economic Policies of the Government for this year.

It is like batting before Brian Lara or Sir Garfield Sobers, where your usual fans would like you to see some runs but they really would like you to get out, so that the prolific batsman would come.

Mr. Speaker, I am also sandwiched between the greatest Parliamentary optometrist ever to come into this Chamber and a true visionary. A true Parliamentary eye specialist, the Honourable Member who spoke before me, because, Sir, if you mention the word community tourism, it was his idea. If you mention the word town centre at Nesfield, it was his idea. If you mention the word sugar cane and the reform of the sugar sector, it was his idea. If you mention the word China, he would tell you that he and Sir James Tudor talked about that in 1991 before he came in here. I am sandwiched between this

optometrist and a man who does not need an optometrist, a true visionary in the form of the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter, a man with great foresight. However, Sir, I intend to perform in the same way in which the tourism industry has performed in the last two to three years.

Sir, let me begin by saying that I am most flattered by the words of encouragement that have come from both sides, relative to the performance of the tourism industry in the past two to three years. I guess that like any Honourable Member, I could gloat and beat my chest and do all the other things. Sir, I still believe that the tourism industry, with the sterling performance that even the Opposition admits is still very challenged and there is still a lot to do, relative to our tourism industry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use this opportunity at the start of this debate to thank all of the tourism workers, hotel workers, taxi men, Barbados Tourism Authority staff and the people at the two ports of entry, who do not get an opportunity to stand in front of Parliament or in front of microphones but who work very hard every day and have contributed substantially to our tourism performance over this period of time. Sir, these are really the salt of the tourism industry and the people who have contributed to that performance.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that I should begin this debate by reflecting in a very sober manner on the Prime Minister and Minister of Finances's words, as he was about to end his presentation. In the final section of his presentation, he spoke about the issues of living in very changed times. He also spoke about the single action economic developments, which he would have experienced at another time of his career, modest in effect and entirely manageable in their policy development, but a large number of powerful and sometimes conflicting forces operating simultaneously, are now coming at us from all sides.

Sir, he also talked about the far reaching shocks within a highly compressed time period, and the fact that the international community has no disposition to accept legitimate responsibility for the likes of us, people who are small, still developing, post slavery and post colonial. He said that we must wrench the harvest of growth and development from an increasing difficult economic field and out of necessity, Mr. Speaker, we must earn our way in the world.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that every Barbadian, and I am sure the Honourable Members of this Chamber would seek to reflect upon these words that this is a more difficult world than we have ever faced as a small developing nation.

Mr. Speaker, earlier in his presentation, he talked about our consumption patterns. He said that globalisation has created these massive cultural shifts which bear social and economic costs for people like us, small developing nations. The way we eat, dress and entertain ourselves, we are behaving like those who have much greater resources than we have ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, these symbols of prosperity have now come at a time that gives us this predilection to live above our means. Although, Sir, we would not want to deny our people the opportunity to seek higher levels of growth and prosperity, someone has to pay for all of this in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, he also made the point that we are consuming imports at a faster rate than we are generating the earning of exports. I must say that managing such fundamental change, while meeting

our obligations to open up our markets, while ensuring continued stability and growth is in itself, a monumental path for any administration.

House 049, sequence 12, 20:

2014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Mr. Speaker, this state of affairs has created a precarious environment, but one that we have managed in the last ten years.

Mr. Speaker, we need to temper our consumption in Barbados by our own conscious behaviour as Barbadians. We need to do so without dampening or slowing the progress or the pace of development in our country. We need to earn our way in the world, but the only way for us to do that is to shore up the productive sectors of our society while we seek to control our expenditure in Barbados. We need to meet our obligations to liberalising our markets. We also need to meet our financial obligations committed to previously. Sir, we must do all of that without dampening the quality of life that we all boast about in Barbados, through the rest of the Caribbean and even in some parts of the developed world.

Sir, I believe the Honourable Member for St. Peter, the Minister of Finance, has tackled this task admirably, resolutely, and strategically in the last ten years. Although the challenges came, we believe we have done an excellent job in managing the Barbados economy in the last decade.

Sir, there is a need for us to increase productivity in Barbados. This has been the centre of great debate both at the personal level and at the national level. In a service-driven economy we need to shore up the productivity that we have in Barbados. Sir, I believe that we have tackled those areas that have the greatest potential to derail our productivity and to dampen our competitiveness in Barbados. We have tackled the issues that are of necessity and the issues that lend to this 'feel good' spirit that contributes to the overall national productivity. Sir, I believe that the Minister of Finance has outlined and utilised all the fiscal initiatives here that are possible to do so.

Sir, in my estimation, this presentation is maybe the best presentation that I have heard the Honourable Member for St. Peter, the Minister of Finance, made so far since I have been in this August Chamber.

Sir, let me outline the ones that in my opinion has sought to move us to the level of productivity that is so necessary to ensure our competitiveness in the future. The issue of the National Initiative on Services Excellence (NISE) Programme should have a far-reaching effect at transforming our service-centred economy. The tourism sector will benefit significantly from the issue because the service component of the tourism and hospitality industry stands to benefit as well as the other sectors.

Sir, I believe that questions of competitiveness would be answered through this National Initiative on Services Excellence. Through this initiative we should also be able to engender a new national service

culture. A new national service culture must emerge in Barbados if we, as a service-centred economy, must continue to be competitive. Therefore, I am encouraging all Barbadians to get on board with this NISE programme. I believe that this will engender the type of cultural change that is necessary to fuel greater productivity and to shore up our competitiveness in the years to come.

Sir, the Minister of Finance has tackled the issue of gridlock on our roads. I believe that nothing is gnawing away more at our productivity than this phenomenon of gridlock on our roads in Barbados. I believe that the mix of traffic management strategies that have been put on the table to improve efficiency and clear major routes are in themselves going to work. Many people spent a lot of time on the issue of overpasses. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central spoke to the issue of paying a toll on the road and said that in other jurisdictions you pay for the roads by toll. Sir, the Democratic Labour Party needs to state their position relative to paying tolls on the road. If that is what they want to propose, I think they need to say so to the people of Barbados.

Sir, I believe that we have tackled the issue of housing for our people. The Prime Minister made reference to the provision of low income housing for \$50 000 or less. This brought out a criticism from the Opposition that we are going back to the days of the 60s and 70s and maybe the 50s.

Sir, I find it incredible that an Opposition that makes up part of a Government can have an issue and a negative about us being able to provide low income housing for the people of Barbados to the standards where a low income earner could get a house for \$50 000. It boggles the mind to seek to understand how this could be an issue for criticism by the Opposition because most of them, Mr. Speaker, are going home to bigger and better houses.

The Minister of Finance has also tackled the issue of the 3 000 derelict houses in Barbados and the renewal programme. We have also looked after the most vulnerable in our society, empowering the physically challenged through the Ministry of Education programme to facilitate the training for these folks and the expansion of Project Oasis. We have long talked about the issue of the boys 'on the block' and even that brought some criticism.

We have tackled the concept of a universal preschool access for all children between three and five years old. We have tackled the issue of pensioners and what pensioners get in Barbados. We are moving NIS pensions from \$105 to \$110 weekly and non contributory pensions from \$86 to \$90 weekly. We have also tackled the issue of taxation. These are all issues that Barbadians talk about every day and that people take to parliamentarians and to the constituency offices. The issue of personal and corporate tax has now been tackled as well as the issue of the continued reform of our economic earning sectors.

Sir, whenever I hear in this Chamber about the issue of reform and the repositioning of the Barbadian economy and how we should have moved to reposition the Barbadian economy at an early stage, it boggles my mind. The concept of repositioning and reforming an economy cannot be a single action, it has to be a series of constant actions that respond to certain external shocks. Sir, we could not have predicted in 1994 all of the issues that we would have to face in every productive sector.

If I remember correctly the first action ever taken by this administration in 1994 was to deal with the issue of seeking to reform and reposition the manufacturing sector in Barbados. The individual sectors

and the economy must constantly be in a reform mode to respond immediately to the new risks and uncertainties that will arise and that will threaten our economy. We must pursue a process of selected stimulation of the economy to further diversify our export base, that is how we must manage the economy.

Sir, agriculture and manufacturing has been given new leases on life in this particular Budget presentation. The fact that these sectors are the ones that feel the full brunt of trade liberalisation means that we have more than admirably tackled these issues. No single act of reform could have anticipated what would have affected these sectors in the future. Sir, the initiatives in this year's Statement are meant to continue tailoring activities in these sectors to replace many of the commodities that we now import.

Sir, I think that the Honourable Minister of Finance has tackled most of the issues that are fundamental and serious to continue reforming the economy, and those things that are central in people's mind about where Barbados must go and the things that worry and bother Barbadians most.

Sir, I turn to the issue of the tourism sector. Even the Opposition has agreed that the tourism sector has performed exceptionally well during the past two to three years, never mind the little darts that are thrown. Sir, in the past four years every single indicator in the tourism sector points to a sterling performance. We get more arrivals, land and cruise-based passengers, than we have ever had in Barbados.

House 049 Sequence 110

8:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Mr. Speaker, we have brought more aeroplanes to Barbados than we have ever brought in any time during the development of tourism, and they are still coming. We have brought more cruise ships to Barbados than ever before. We even have eleven ships homeporting in Barbados. Sir, more money has been spent in this sector than has ever been spent. We have more investments in this industry than has ever been seen any time in its history. There are more people employed in this industry than ever before. There has been more ancillary sector players involved and more accommodation rooms in the sector than ever before. We have had the highest occupancies in a decade.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that all of this points to a tourism industry that is doing very well. However, it must be noted that we have done all of this and that in an environment where September 11th, 2001 and terrorism have been at the centre of our thoughts; where there was SARS and foot-and-mouth disease; where there was one of the worst global airlines crisis ever in the history of the world; where there have been increases in fuel prices; trade liberalisation; where there are issues effecting ownership of hotels; and issues of vertical integration. Sir, these are all patterns that have kept us out of the ownership of the hotel and tourism industry and through all of this we have performed well.

Mr. Speaker, it is easy and it would be easy for us to rest on our laurels but we will not. Through all

of this there are still some very severe challenges that we are facing in the industry, such as profitability that has plagued the sector. I believe that the Tourism Development Act has helped considerably but it is only two years old and still needs more work. The Act has been the catalyst for major investments in the tourism industry. Sir, the issue about how many rooms were provided has already been outlined by the Right Honourable Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, however, as the industry grows, the real crux of the matter will be that too many Barbadians are still feeling as though they are being left out of the progress of the tourism industry in Barbados. We, therefore, need to get more persons becoming involved in tourism at the level to get a direct benefit from the industry. We also need to make sure that those who are already trading in the industry, who are under severe pressure, must be able to derive a greater benefit from the industry.

Sir, the sustainability of our industry depends upon how we involve all Barbadians, for them to feel that they can effectively participate in tourism, so that they can derive substantial benefits. We, therefore, need to educate those who are not directly involved, to truly appreciate the vital importance of the sector to their well-being and development. Sir, that would have to be the wave of the future.

Mr. Speaker, although the sector is led by the hotel accommodation sub-sector, the tourism experience involves an infinite number of direct and indirect service transactions across many economic sectors. It ranges from hotels; guest houses; public utility services; transport service; air, ocean and ground transport; entertainment; food supplier; banking and telecommunications.

Sir, our ability to compete internationally in the future in this new and emerging environment, will depend upon whether or not the whole range of services that make up the tourism experience can be provided efficiently, at a reasonable cost, and in a manner that exceeds the customer's expectation. This is going to be the challenge for our tourism industry going into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that as the numbers in tourism continue to grow, we need to refine these numbers to deal with some of the carrying capacity issues that are fundamental to Barbados as to where Barbados goes. That is why I said that we will continue to put numbers on Barbados. Sir, every winter we put almost twice the population of Barbados on this island and these issues have serious implications for disposable solid waste, for health services, for disciplinary forces, for how much space a man needs on the beach, and for our water resources.

Sir, I believe that we have begun to tackle the environmental issues but the product development issues, both soft and hard product development such as the infrastructure of Barbados and the service quality, would all be shored up, if we are to continue having an industry that performs at the highest level.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to the marketing issues, such as to create a Barbados that would be of the highest quality and to encourage the type of tourism and hospitality that favours our level of socio-economic development and our educational standards, Sir, we do need brand named hotels but we do not need a proliferation of brand named hotels that do not meet the standard that has already been set in Barbados. Barbados has built up its brand on small boutique hotels of all classes. That is our hallmark. It is what has set us apart from the rest of the Caribbean. Therefore, what we must continue doing is to set ourselves apart from the rest of the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, the true wave of the tourism sector is to have indigenous brands that are successful and exportable and involving as many persons as possible but building a series of indigenous small boutique brands that do speak to the quality of our destination.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot figure out why then the Opposition would be opposed to the GEMS of Barbados project as they have been over time. The GEMS rooms, as part of the expanded GEMS portfolio, are performing better collectively than when they were individual rooms in Barbados. Sir, these indigenous brands called GEMS have also been the catalyst for much of the development on the south coast of Barbados. Sir, almost every hotel on the south coast of Barbados, during the last two to three years, has either refurbished, reformed itself, or has expanded the number of rooms it has.

Mr. Speaker, there is a price though that must be paid for the State's intervention in shoring up the small hotel sector on the south coast of Barbados. That is why we have continued with an initiative that looks to bringing another 500 rooms into this pool. These are rooms that are not as marketable as they should be. Their owners are people who have very little depth but they are playing in the tourism sector as they should because they are not up to marketable standards by many of our tour operators and partners across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we intend to make available \$30 million to them as a loan. The issue that would come out in this situation is that we could not have built or bought 500 rooms in Barbados for \$30 million but we can certainly refurbish and upgrade them, to bring them up to three-star and four-star standard. It then allows us to continue to make them tradable.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the GEMS has been the best attempt that we have made an affirmative action in the tourism industry in Barbados. I believe that an administration could have put all of these rooms on the auction block and let the traditional private sector buy them up but in most cases, GEMS has been able to play the role that this administration had envisioned that it would have played.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a price paid but the GEMS has kept some small operators in the sector. It continues to confer on them an ownership right. It has increased the number of functional rooms on the south coast of Barbados. It has kept persons employed year-round when these hotels should have been closed. It has created a tradable brand that is now recognisable and very marketable. It has raised the standard of south coast rooms. It has helped us to narrow the gap between the south coast and the west coast, which continues to be a problem in Barbados, that is, a small tourism sector with limited resources, trading in a big market. It has allowed us to produce activities in the ancillary sector that we would have never had before. It has created the opportunity for new mixed levels of products in the sector.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the GEMS, in many instances, may not have played out exactly the way in which we might have envisioned but it has contributed significantly to shoring up our fortunes in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard criticisms about the Best of Barbados programme. This may be the most misunderstood programme ever in the history of Barbados. H:No.049(111)840 p.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Hon. N A. LYNCH:

A lot of people forget that the programme, the Best of Barbados, was conceived in adversity and born in a crisis. Sir, just after September 11, 2001, we were staring down the barrel of a gun and everyone was uncertain about what the future held for the tourism sector in the region. It was necessary at the time for us to focus on discounting and rebating and people spent a lot of time focusing on this but more money has been spent on the promotion and advertising of Barbados within that programme than has been spent on rebating.

It has placed us on the Harris Poll run by the Wall Street Journal for the first time ever to be one of the most recognisable destinations in the world. Sir, when Americans were asked to choose a tropical destination, for the first time ever, Barbados, because of being listed in the Harris Poll, was chosen while Jamaica and The Bahamas were not chosen. Sir, that is what the Best of Barbados did for this country. It has now caused us to be able to create a number of new non-stop flights into Barbados which we did not have before.

Sir, discounting was necessary because all the other long haul destinations were discounting after September 11th so Barbados could not afford to sit back and not discount our rates. Sir, the Best of Barbados continues to work for us even though we have stopped the programme. Sir, the tourism gurus in this House cannot tell us what they would have done under the same circumstances.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member has two minutes to conclude.

Hon. N A. LYNCH:

Mr. Speaker, thank you. I want to say that if our tourism industry is to continue to thrive, we must move our tourism to the standard that makes every customer coming to Barbados feel that he is the only one.

We have to utilise all the technology available like the Smart Card and such like which we are working on at the Barbados Tourism Authority.

I believe that our product development standard needs to be higher so that people get the optimum benefit for their money.

Sir, small-boutique-high-valued hotels is the brand which Barbados needs to build.

I heard some criticism about the large hotels not being helped but the large hotels have already got a substantial boost from the Tourism Development Act.

The agriculture produce, because of the recent rains were damaged and, Sir, we will use our best endeavours to help with all these issues but comprehensive studies need to be done to determine to what extent we can contribute to the development of these sectors. Sir, we have done an excellent job in

managing this economy and the tourism sector.

Mr. Speaker, in giving full support to the measures before us, I want to say that we do not need any advice in financial management of the economy from the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, I came to Parliament in 1994, like everybody else, looking for the Barbadian dream because we were told it was to be found in this area. I am now more convinced that the Barbadian dream is more in this area than it is on the other side of the isle. I know that Barbadians also recognise this and will continue to support a Government that takes them closer to that Barbadian dream.

I hope that by God's grace, we can continue this journey and bring levels of growth and prosperity to all the people in Barbados.

Sir, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Right Honourable Prime Minister will now wind up.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been a truly remarkable debate. In my presentation, I introduced on behalf of the Government a comprehensive range of new economic measures in respect of every major productive sector of the economy to carry forward all, even those that have been performing admirably but more especially to enable the country to begin to tap an enormous potential that has hitherto not been tapped to allow Barbados to become an important international business sector by developing its non-financial services tapping into our professionals and their human resources.

Sir, in this debate, the Government introduced a proposal to launch a major economic institution, Export Barbados Inc. which would impact on the future of the Barbadian economy.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate, the Government introduced a new institutional arrangement to change the entire economic culture of Barbados, the National Initiative for Service Excellence.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate the most far-reaching proposals ever brought before this House to galvanise the introduction of a Government to change the entire culture of our public service, the climate for doing business and to change the very way in which the judicial sector relates to the national economy were introduced.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate, specific measures, not of a public relation kind but specific measures, backed with financial muscle were introduced to treat to the issue of the overcoming of grid lock in this country and giving the Barbadian society an opportunity to increase its productivity by dealing with a simple thing like putting the removal of traffic congestion on the table of national concern.

Sir, in this debate, we brought forward further measures for the development of our small business sector. I am pleased that we have steered the course on this because one of the first acts of this administration was to say to people in the small business sector that they had lived too long on loans and that they now had to become managers of equity and how to use venture capital. I am pleased that the

small business sector has responded and are now in a position to respond to increased resources.

Sir, in this debate, we sought to transform the struggling small hotel sector not by \$5 million here or \$2 million there but by an act of confidence that the Government will give them \$30 million to take 500 rooms that cannot be advertised to bring them into the mainstream of the Barbados tourism product, Sir, to take no-star hotels, owned by Barbadians and make them four-star hotels of which we can be proud. Mr. Speaker, we do not need hotel chains when we have the ingenuity of the Barbadian people to do these things.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate, we again outlined Government's major new housing initiative. I want to congratulate and thank my Minister of Housing for the tremendous job she is doing to bring low-income, affordable housing within the reach of the ordinary Barbadian. Sir, she is doing a wonderful job.

Mr. Speaker, in this debate, new financial arrangements were pronounced to ensure that tourism marketing and the marketing of our international business and financial sector has dedicated finances for the first time in history so that it does not have to be responsive or be at the mercy of caps imposed by the Minister of Finance. This will allow us to conceive of sustainable promotion and hence sustainable development.

We introduced plans to ready the society for the World Cup 2007 and to carry tax reform. Sir, we not only carried forward tax but carried it forward at this time of financial difficulty. While we are carrying forward tax, we are taking 7 000 people off the tax roll in January and introducing new tax incentives to open new eras of economic opportunity for our health care sector and the professionals therein.

Sir, we also found the time in this debate to introduce new measures to support our senior citizens through increased pension to begin to believe that those who are physically and otherwise challenged should now be part of the productive economy and not be on the fringe.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that was the import of the measure. We also felt we needed to advance the important work of social engineering of making the boys on 'the block' not a nuisance to the public but potentially productive high-valued Barbadians citizens.

Sir, if you asked me how I hope this debate would be remembered and what the Government contributed to it, I would say that this Government sought in this presentation to take Barbados where no other country has ever gone in relation to its social capital.

H49/8:

50 p.m.

Sequence 112

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

There are other countries in the world that may profess that they have made university education

available to its citizens. We have also done that. Some others have universal capacity for secondary education and some in the Caribbean do not yet have it but we have had that.

Sir, we have universal primary, secondary, tertiary and we have now decided to go where no other country in the world has ever gone by having a fourth tier to cater to those of our children in that period before school to give them a head start in the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, no other country in the world can speak of a social system that makes provision for universal primary, secondary and tertiary education. I thank this Government for putting me in a position to be a Leader who can make this launch forward and take Barbados to the very frontier of social development among the entire family of nations.

Sir, these things must matter. It must also matter that we are now a society that can win a competitive bid to host the World Cup Cricket. It says something about the quality of what Barbados has to offer. It must also matter that, for example, next week the United Nations AIDS (UN AIDS) is insisting that I must come to Jamaica because United Nations AIDS wants to showcase the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS and they want to showcase Barbados as the best practice in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It must also matter when we start to compare our economic and social statistics and how they measure up, not with the developing world but with the advanced economies.

Sir, there is a set of statistics that is routinely published by the World Economic Outlook. I am not going to compare us with the developing world. However, there is section on the advanced economies. The World Economic Output 2004, the advanced economies 3.1 per cent growth; major advanced economies have grown by 3.3 per cent this year; Barbados has grown by 3 per cent and the European Union has grown by 2 per cent. Barbados is growing faster than the European Union, Sir.

Sir, on the unemployment rate, Barbados' unemployment rate is now less than 10 per cent. Germany, a country that fought a World War and has an industrial base that allows it to be one of the world's major powers, has an unemployment of 10.2 per cent. Spain has an unemployment rate of 10.8 per cent, France, 9.4 per cent, Finland, 9.7 per cent and Israel, 10.7 per cent. Sir, with the billions of dollars in support that Israel gets from the United States's economy and the Jews all over the world, this 21 by 14 square miles economy has a lower unemployment rate than Israel. These things matter, Sir.

Sir, I told this country that I am going to cut the Government's fiscal deficit from 5.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent in two years. What is it in the advanced countries? In the advanced countries the fiscal deficit for the year is 3.2 per cent, which is higher than Barbados'.

Mr. Speaker, the great United States of America has a fiscal deficit of 4.2 per cent. It has a higher fiscal deficit than we have in this country and yet we are getting Standard and Poor's criticism. The United Kingdom has a fiscal deficit of 3.1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, all of the major advanced economies have a fiscal deficit of 3.9 per cent and Barbados' is 2.5 per cent.

Sir, it matters that this 21 x 14 square mile economy has the highest quality of living and continues to have the highest standard of living of any country in the developing world and in this entire hemisphere.

Sir, from Alaska to Chile, we have a standard of living and have maintained it only to be exceeded by two countries, United States of America and Canada. I would like to see the day when we can match those countries too.

Sir, this has been a remarkable debate. Although there is a sense in the society of some controversy and crisis, the state of affairs that I represented in my Economic and Financial Statement to Parliament has not been contradicted.

Indeed, when the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West tried to cast doubt on the nature of our unemployment statistics, he had to be rebuked by the facts that the unemployment claims for the year-to-date are almost 40 per cent less than they were a year ago.

Sir, the state of affairs has not been contradicted and none of the essential new policy measures which I brought to this Honourable House, not one had been deemed by the other side to be other than in the country's best interest.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of a higher acclaim for a Statement of Economic and Financial policy that the analysis has not been questioned, the policies are not said to be unsound and, therefore, I cannot think of any good reason to alter the substance and spirit of the Resolution before the House.

I have, therefore, to thank all the public officials who contributed magnificently to this work. I want to thank all those who were involved in the national consultation on the economy. I might have been a little bit harsh in some of my criticism and if there are any bruised feeling I greatly apologise for it but there is a lot at stake. Sir, when we have national consultations and we invite people to bring serious proposals, we cannot fool around with the fortunes of this economy and a national consultation is for us to get together and present the best proposals. Sir, if I was hard, it was in support of a good cause.

I want to thank all Members on the Government's side for not only their contribution in this debate but this is a third term and we are in uncharted political waters. It is always the case that as we go deeper and deeper into an administration you have to make decisions. The Government faces trying times and these times have been challenging.

Sir, we have to take tough decisions. We do not always expect to be popular in things that we do but I give this Honourable House and the country the assurance that we do things that are in the country's best interest. Sir, when you have to take unpopular decisions, with a whole Government it can be difficult. Even with a two-man exercise it can be difficult without them having to make difficult decisions. Sir, holding a seven-man Opposition together is very difficult but holding a Government together in challenging times, there can be difficulty in a third term.

I want to thank this Barbados Labour Party for holding the fort and holding together. I want to urge us to let us go forward together and continue to give this country the sterling service that the people of this good country deserve. I thank every one for their work this year.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party turned up to this debate not to engage on matters relating to this economy but they used the floor of Parliament as a platform for dealing with its bitter and biting leadership issues. There are a few speeches from Members, my friend the Honourable Member for St.

Lucy and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, that were not in that mode. In large measure, this was the jungle of George Street transposed onto the floor of the House of Assembly.

Sir, let me explain why I say this. The present Leader of the Opposition has been criticised by the former Leader for intellectualising politics and for his failure to go for the jugular. Therefore, the present Leader is under pressure to move away from being analytical and being sound and go into a new paradigm, that I think is uncomfortable for him, and go for the jugular and whatever that means.

Sir, a criterion has also been set for the Democratic Labour Party and it is not who has the most enlightened vision for the transformation of the country but who can best deal with 'Arthur', and I do not know the 'Arthur' to whom they referred, but this is what is openly said on the platform of the Democratic Labour Party.

49/9:00 p.m.

Sequence 113

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 114, 9:
00 p.m.

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

We have to find a leader, not who can develop Barbados best, but who can deal with Arthur.

Each one now is trying to outdo the other, to lay claims to the loyalty of the Democratic Labour Party family, by the virulence of their attacks on the Prime Minister of Barbados. Sir, it is well with my soul and being 20 years in politics, there is nothing that can be said about me that is going humbug me. I am going to be the same person when I leave politics as when I came into it, so this business that you have to become a leader by destroying Arthur does not bother Arthur.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition says that he is under pressure and he has, in this debate regrettably in my judgment, tried to - and I am not using this to refer to anybody that is known in the House - out Thompson, not to draw from his training and talents but to indulge in what I thought was beneath him, this broad search for smut, smear and corruption and to try to taint me by association with the work that acquaintances of mine might be doing.

Sir, he is using a formula that has failed and will fail. We heard it all before, the GEMS of Barbados, Greenland, the Transport Board and so on. In fact, Sir, the only thing that was new was this business about Mollyneux Well. I listened to the speech for almost three hours and it has to be said that he fell into a well and he went into the sewerage. Because, it was Mollyneux Well and then he went into the South Coast Sewerage Project.

I have no intention at all of following him either into the well or into the sewerage. I am not into that

mood this evening but I would want to say, Sir, I had hoped that the debate would have been joined and, he would have used his talents as a product of the Cave Hill Campus and Faculty of Economics to engage. He is my constituent and I like him, Mr. Speaker, and I gave him a toe hold from page 17 of my speech, and I quote:

“Because we have raised no new local or foreign loans to support Government’s operations, we experienced some difficulties managing the Government’s cash flow position in recent months. Arrangements have however been put in place to enable the Government to tap the excess local liquidity to meet our deficit and to enable us to carry forward all aspects of our public finances in good order.”

Sir, if I had put that in a Budget speech and Sir Richard Haynes was on the opposite side, the whole debate would have been galvanised by one issue. I want to go back to my colleague because he is an economist and he and I would have gone through the same discipline. He would know that in dealing with balance of payments problems for the ordinary man, the movements in the current account obviously are important, but an economist sees the balance of payments as a holistic system. The balance of payments in the first and final analysis is a monetary phenomenon.

Mr. Speaker, this has been proven from the Pollack model from 1957 and all the good analyses from economics has treated the balance of payments, not just as a set of trade relations, but also integrated monetary analysis in it. Economics is not an exact science but one of the few things in economics that is true is that which is set out on page 41 of our Economic and Financial Statistics. It is called the Monetary Survey and this is one of the things in economics that is true and it is measured every month in Barbados.

Sir, the total supply of notes and coins in a society, plus the time deposits, savings deposits and all the other things that are called the total monetary liabilities, money supply, must be equal to the net foreign assets, plus the net domestic assets. This is true and it is here recorded. If you allow the net domestic assets to rise faster than your money supply, it brings about a corresponding reduction in your net foreign exchange reserves.

Sir, in every instance in Barbados where there has been a problem with the reserves, it is not only because of the current account situation, but because of excessive domestic credit creation. I have written about this, Mr. Speaker, and he must know that this is so because it is one of the few things in economics that is true and every month it is measured. If you allow the domestic credit to rise faster than the money supply, it will cause a change in the reserves.

Sir Richard Haynes used to deal with this, Mr. Speaker, because he used to monitor domestic credit creation and any time you have high-powered money creation, such as the Central Bank creating an overdraft, you have a problem with the reserves.

Sir, had Sir Richard Haynes been dealing with this presentation, the whole debate would have been the relationship between credit creation and the movement of the reserves. I said to the Honourable Member that because he is so fascinated with trying to out Thompson Thompson, he failed his side.

I came to the House expecting the debate to be joined. I promised him one thing. He had one chance, because as I said last year, we refused to use domestic long term credit, such as treasury bills

and bonds, I put that now in place. Sir, he will not get the chance again, one chance, but he failed his side by not using his talents as an economist. It is here for him and there is nothing hidden.

Sir, may I say as well that I was disappointed that he had to appear to be calling on this Government to provide him with the information. He is the first Leader of the Opposition who should not be in this position, because the very first action of this Government was to introduce, in this Parliament, the change of the scope and constitution of the Public Accounts Committee of Barbados.

We have broadened it, Mr. Speaker, not only in terms of membership but we required that all of the things about which his Committee does not know about, every company, every state, he can call them, summons them, have public hearings and report to this Parliament.

He now has to stop coming to the House and calling upon the Government to tell him what he should be discerning by having the Public Accounts Committee functioning properly. He has to do it and the Opposition has to stop being lazy.

Sir, I was in here, as part of a three-member Opposition and I know what it is for an Opposition, small in number, to work very hard. It was a three-member Opposition that made the Public Accounts Committee work to the point where we could carry out investigation into the St. Joseph Hospital.

Sir, I am tired of hearing about the GEMS when you have the power to summons the Committee to look at it and stop calling for this and that, use this act. It is the first action this time around that is given that power.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

Sir, he does not want the facts because he wants to continue to smear the Government. If the truth is told, then he has no case. This is what I think he fears, but the country must be tired now of hearing about the GEMS, Greenland and the nonsense about JAWS when in fact, the truth can be discerned. Sir, sometimes the truth can be a mighty sword that slits the throats of those who come upon it by accident and indifference.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be drawn into scurrilous debates with him either. Sir, everybody in Barbados whether you are an individual or a company, need to engage in debt to acquire assets to improve your circumstances. This is how people buy houses, build firms and build companies and countries. The point is that you are getting into debt to create assets that have a value that is longer and more useful than one year and lasts for a large number of times.

Sir, we heard about the debt increase, and the Government has to justify why it increases the debt, although I would say this to the Opposition politically, you have to stop telling the public that the Barbados Labour Party has nothing to show for ten years because that is a confession of political ineptitude. How is it that you cannot beat a Government that has nothing to show for ten years? It says something about you.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

I would be embarrassed to say that I got beat 26 to two and they got beat 23 to seven but a Government that is doing nothing at all beat me 26 to two. It is a confession of political ineptitude, so stop saying that. You may question our judgements but that is foolish. It is called an unbelievable lie because the people know better.

Sir, look at what has happened to our debt. Between 1978 and 1986, the debt increased from \$372 million to

\$1.301 billion so it virtually tripled during that period. Between 1986 and 1994, it doubled, from \$1.3 billion to \$2.6 billion. In ten years, between 1994 to 2000 it doubled again. This is telling us that every ten years virtually the debt of the Barbados economy doubles, but, Sir, the Honourable Member told me that he is doing his research.

House 049, sequence 114, 21:
1014

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, I have said that the domestic debt is going to be repaid by Barbadians to Barbadians. What I am not going to do is to leave this country with an unsustainable foreign debt because the problem comes in paying your foreign debt. The real problem that countries have is the paying of the foreign debt because you have to pay it in foreign exchange. What has been happening to our foreign debt?

Mr. Speaker, we pledge that we were going to bring down our foreign debt. At the end of 2002, it was at a height of 1 345 000 000. This year, in every month, it came down to the point where it is now at 1 295 000 000. Sir, what country in the world is bringing down its foreign debt. In fact, the problem with the world is that the large economies of the world are increasing their foreign debt at a rapid rate. However, this little 21 x 14 country is showing a discipline which some of the most advanced countries in the world cannot show; yet we are hearing that the debt is an issue. Sir, this is because the Honourable Member is not paying attention to the work that he should be paying attention to.

Sir, I give the House the assurance that we are going to continue to show discipline. The Government is going to be relying, I will explain why later, less and less on foreign commercial borrowing. We can live on our foreign earnings and on private capital inflows. My Cabinet is going to be disciplined to bring down the foreign debt. Sir, the Leader of the Opposition does not need to come to this Parliament to call for information on statutory boards, he can use his Public Accounts Committee, and stop being tiresome.

Sir, an issue about water has been raised in this debate, and I will respond to it. Sir, to the extent that the Government is proposing to increase water rates, it becomes a matter that could justifiably be the

realm of public criticism. I suppose every time a Government has to change something like a water rate, you are going to get criticism. However, I say to the Democratic Labour Party that it does not properly fall from anybody in the Democratic Labour Party mouth to be a critic of the circumstances that requires this Government now to increase the water rates. In fact, let me say for the record that if we in this Government had complied with agreements signed in 1993 by the Democratic Labour Party and had not fought and fought every year since 1996 water rates in this country would have been increased. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West must do his research before he comes to this House to talk foolishness.

Sir, the water rates in this country are now being determined not because of the Fair Trading Commission but because loan agreements have been signed relative to the access for resources to build sewerage facilities in Barbados. It was the same case in the 1970s when a Mr. Sandiford signed with the InterAmerican Development Bank and it is the same thing here now.

Sir, on March 08, 1993, the Democratic Labour Party entered into a loan contract with the InterAmerican Development Bank, and I am going to make it a document of the House, for the South Coast Sewerage Project. I refer the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to Section 606 of this Agreement called rates, and I will read it slowly, Sir.

“The borrower shall take appropriate measures acceptable to the bank to ensure that the Barbados Water Authority’s revenue resulting from the rates for water and sewerage services shall be sufficient to cover all operating cost of the system including those relating to administration, corporation, maintenance and depreciation or revalued assets. If the application of the foregoing does not generate sufficient revenues to cover the timely services of the Barbados Water Authority obligations including the service of its debts and a proportional part of the investment programme for the system, that is the South Coast Sewerage Project, as indicated in section 4 of Annex A, the borrower in coordination with the Barbados Water Authority shall take the necessary measures including rate increases to obtain the additional resources.”

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party on April 8, 1993 signed this loan agreement with the IADB. This agreement says that you are going to borrow money from us to build a sewerage facility, the Barbados Water Authority now must every year cover a 100 per cent of its costs in relation to maintenance, administration and depreciation as well as a part of the cost of building the sewerage system from the revenues of the Barbados Water Authority, and if the revenues are not equal, you have to increase your rates.

Sir, from as far back as 1996, the Democratic Labour Party have a history of dealing with water. They raised the rates in 1976. In 1986 when they came into Office, they gave some tax cuts and caused the Water Authority to take the money that it had been accumulating to buy mains and to buy Treasury Bills to pay for the tax cuts and they cut the water rates at the same time. That happened. This is history.

So all the problems in Bagatelle and wherever else that the Honourable Member is fumigating now about started because the Barbados Water Authority was bled of the returned earnings by which it was going to carry out its capital programme. Also all the problems with the water mains leaking and so on is because the Barbados Water Authority was stripped in 1986 of the resources that was necessary to

replace the mains. If they take the money from it and put it in Treasury Bills to pay for the tax cuts, what did they expect was going to happen: Bad water in Bagatelle. That is the history.

The point, Mr. Speaker, is that to get money for the sewerage plant the Government of the day signed that they had to meet the full cost of water. Sir, from 1996 the Barbados Water Authority has been coming to Government saying that they have this agreement to get access to resources for the sewerage system, the revenue is no longer covering a 100 per cent of the operating cost including depreciation and debt service, and it needs to raise rates, but how can the Government in conscience do this in circumstances where we have a protocol in place to hold major prices in line.

Sir, when the Democratic Labour Party entered this loan contract in 1993 they should have told this to the social partners because they were making commitments about future prices of water that they did not discuss with anybody in Barbados.

Sir, we then started to negotiate with the InterAmerican Development Bank and told them to let us take out the depreciation and the Government is going to be responsible to help the Barbados Water Authority to raise money for the replacement of mains rather than pass on that as an immediate cost. The 1993 contract required the Barbados Water Authority to raise money from Barbadians to service the debt, but in 2000 the Government of Barbados said that it is going to treat to servicing of the Barbados Water Authority debt as a shareholder's obligation, so take that out too.

Mr. Speaker, we told the Barbados Water Authority that before it asks us to increase the water rates to the poor people in this country, it must do two things: try its best to curtail its cost... Sir, you should only raise rates, whether it is tax rates, bus fares or whatever else, after an enterprise has exhausted every possibility of raising its revenue at existing prices.

Sir, what did we do? We told the Barbados Water Authority to put in place a revenue enhancing set of mechanisms that would allow it, without changing rates, to get more revenue. What they did was to put in 60 000 metres. They then did a comprehensive audit of the customer base and that brought in \$1.1 million. What I mean by that, Sir, is that there are some people in Barbados who are commercial users but were paying water rates as domestic users. So after doing this comprehensive audit of the customer base and by changing the customer base, it got in \$1.1 million.

Sir, we then found the Barbados Water Authority with a high record of receivables, \$38.4 million. Over the last few years we have been trying our best, before we move to changing water rates, to see if it could get in some of that money because if everybody who owe pay then you would not have to change the rates for those who are paying. The first thing we did was to use attorneys on a commission basis but this proved ineffective as only five per cent of the amount assigned to the attorneys were collected over a two-year period. The Barbados Water Authority also pursued collections by filing judgements in the High Court, but this proved problematical. This is a small society, Mr. Speaker, and Barbadian people do not like to go and turn off other Barbadians water, so getting judgements in the High Court against people is problematic.

Sir, in 2000 the Barbados Water Authority engaged the services of a collection agency and assigned water accounts with balances of \$16.8 million to it and asked it to go and bring in this money for it. The collection agency brought in \$6.5 million in the first year. Sir, the Barbados Water Authority tried

everything to collect more revenue at the existing rates.

House 049 Sequence 115

9:20 p.m.

Thursday, December 09, 2004

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that before we come to this moment where we have to look at rate changes, we have exhausted every option available to us, to increase the rate by collecting the revenue.

Mr. Speaker, in the interval, the Barbados Water Authority has reached a situation where its deficits are now at a point where it is virtually technically bankrupt, where its accumulated deficits are almost the size of the value of its assets. It, therefore, cannot trade as a bankrupt institution.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will have to do some things which are going to be difficult. We cannot always be popular but I am asking the public to judge us on one ground only, that is, is what we are doing standing the test of reasonableness? Sir, I cannot tell Barbadians that water rates will be held forever constant but the question is, are we doing it in a reasonable way?

Mr. Speaker, I say yes, we are. We have not let the Inter-American Development Bank force us to change water rates in 1996, when this matter first started because Barbadians would have been paying increased water rates for eight years and would have been paying it three years after they would have experienced a wages cut from a cold-hearted Democratic Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, we are now doing it in a fashion that shields the poorest of the poor from any water increases. Sir, 60 per cent of the Barbadian public will not now have to pay any increase in water rates, in the way in which they were seeking to structure rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, I really must tell you that we have spent a lot of time on this and that we are trying our best. We will be working within the context of a loan contract between the Government of Barbados and an international agency.

Sir, our democracy is based upon the concept of the enforceability of contracts and that in order to shield Barbadians from the savagery of a Democratic Labour Party inspired water increases since 1996, we had to walk our way carefully around this contract that they had left in place. Therefore, the rest of Barbados can criticise this Government but it cannot fall from the mouths of any Honourable Member of the Democratic Labour Party to address this matter with honour, without taking into account where they left this country in 1993.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West spoke with his usual innocence by not having access to this document, and I would like to make it a document of this Honourable House so that the Honourable Member can treat to it.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that this country is at an interestingly delicate stage. I am not, in any way, underestimating the balance of payments problems. I will not play with it. Sir, I lived in Jamaica and for seven years I saw that country fooling around with a balance of payment problem, where, as yet, it has not fully recovered.

Mr. Speaker, I came back to Barbados and the first thing I had to do was to negotiate an International Monetary Fund programme to deal with a balance of payment problem in Barbados. Sir, I give this Honourable House the assurance that we are not going to cause any balance of payments problems in the form of loss of reserves by any actions by the Government. We are putting in place measures to change the export culture of the country and to broaden the export base of the country, which I have done.

Mr. Speaker, the one point that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West made, which I will accept, is that some of those measures will take time. What I did not say in my presentation, because I did not want to repeat what was said last year, is that for a country like Barbados, the best and most immediate means by which it can deal with the balance of payment issues, would not be on the current account but on capital inflows. Long-term private capital inflows are some of the best means by which a country like Barbados can deal with its balance of payments.

Mr. Speaker, when a country borrows from abroad to develop itself, it has to repay that loan with interest but when there are long-term capital inflows coming, there is the benefit of direct inflows of foreign exchange immediately when they build things and they only pay back, if they are profitable.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a happy stage in Barbados where there are large numbers of projects which this country must get serious about implementing, like how Trinidad and Tobago is serious about transforming their economy into an industrial economy. Trinidad and Tobago is attracting foreign investment by building such things as aluminum shelters. That is a good thing. Trinidad and Tobago is becoming the powerhouse in the Caribbean for industrial production because they have the energy to do it. Trinidad and Tobago, even with its oil revenue, is attracting long-term foreign investment.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados, therefore, needs to implement those high-quality, high-value projects, that will make us a high-quality exporter of service, while keeping the capital inflows to immediately boost the reserves and the foreign exchange earnings, resulting from the production activities presented through such service, to sustain the foreign exchange earning. And they are there.

Mr. Speaker, we have already approved and are ready to implement all of the retirement villages in St. Peter. We have had water constraints. We are putting in place a executive partner to deal with the water problems in the north. Those projects have been approved, ground has been broken and we will soon start earning foreign exchange.

Sir, I have also approved a project for the Barbados Association of Retired Persons (BARP), for them to build a Retirement Village in St. Philip. I hope that they will cater to the Barbadian community abroad and will get foreign exchange coming in from our people abroad who would be settling in St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, we need to get the Pierhead Project and the foreign exchange finalised. Therefore, we have already approved Sugar Hill, Phase 2, which was held up because of the lack of water in the north.

As the water problem is solved, that has been approved, which means that more foreign exchange is expected.

Sir, in St. Lucy, Government is ready to move the Barbados Youth Service and to transform that important Harrison's Point into a foreign exchange earning base for inland tourism.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados has an exciting range of high-value, large projects that, when implemented, would give us the capital inflows. Sir, the point is, as I have told the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, we have to look at the balance of payments in a holistic way. A current balance in deficit, if matched by a corresponding capital account surplus, will not cause a balance of payments problem. Therefore, the best way to have that capital account surplus is by attracting direct foreign investment.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados' problem is that this country must stop its love/hate relationship with projects of that nature. The rest of the world is busy pressing ahead and we are busy peeping up under ourselves every minute about who got what and who does not have, and progress is being stopped because the policy of envy is causing this country to have an anti-developmental approach to those projects.

Mr. Speaker, I give this Honourable House the assurance that there are some things that we had to do recently, for example, capping land taxes. Most of the investment that we get in Barbados comes from Britain and in Britain there is a cap on their land tax.

Mr. Speaker, we are not doing this because we want to pass money to white, wealthy people, but because these persons come from a culture that is accustomed to cap on land tax. Sir, for example, the final \$3 billion that Sandy Lane wanted to bring into Barbados to build luxury villas was \$3 billion in foreign exchange. That was \$3 billion inflows, depending on the cap. Sir, if we do not have the cap correct to do it right, then we have to revisit it to make sure that we do it right because we want the \$3 billion in foreign exchange. Sir, I am not going to allow this criticism to stop us, while the rest of the world is busily marching forward.

Mr. Speaker, the United States of America can only sustain itself in relation to a deficit on the fiscal account that is larger than ours, and a deficit on the current account that is the same as ours, because the rest of the world is lending money or investing in the United States of America, and so it has to be with us.

Mr. Speaker, I could not have left this debate without touching on a number of matters. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John has fled. He said that he was coming here to decapitate me. He called me some things but I do not mind, I have gotten accustomed now, and in good nature about those things. The Honourable Member for St. John has been 'busing' me now for 17 years in public life, and all it does is cause me to become more and more popular. He has to 'buse' me some more, I like it. He keeps doing it to me all the time. He says things about me having a secret deal and such things.

Sir, I have taken all of that but what I will not agree to is for the Honourable Member for St. John to begin striking at the stability of this country. Sir, this country has been one of the few countries to have commercialised its stability. It is a well-ordered society where the estates of the society respect propriety. Therefore, the notion of the Government of Barbados politicising the Police Force is a

horrible charge.

Mr. Speaker, the Police Act is very clear. It vests, under Section 8, the responsibility for the Superintendent and the governance of the Police Force, to the Governor-General. It causes the Police Force to be answered, not to any politician or to Cabinet, but answerable only to the Governor-General. Therefore, the statement by the Honourable Member for St. John is imputing a very serious allegation about Government and about the breach of the law, to suggest that the Government is now reaching into the Police Force and is politicising it.

H:No.049(116)930 p.m.

Tuesday, December 9, 2004

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

It is also disagreeable for a Member of this Parliament to say that we have been causing the police to search the houses of Members of Parliament and Pan Africanists. It is even more disagreeable when the police said it was not true and called upon the Honourable Member for St. John to produce the evidence but he could not produce one shred of it. Yet the world is going forward because we can see it in the Latin America Monitor and all the other things that pick up the nasty bits about it. Sir, they are lapping it up. Barbados is now a country in which the political directorate is causing the police to search the houses of Members of Parliament which if it were true, we would stand properly to be condemned but, Sir, it is not true. The only Member of Parliament search by the police is the Honourable Member for St. John and my colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister, has explained the circumstances at a dub fete where he too, like others, was searched.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John said that he knows every place in Barbados where drugs are sold. I do not know how he knows this but I feel he should be collaborating with the police because I am sure that the police do not know every place in Barbados where drugs are sold.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the police have called upon him to produce the evidence and he has to do it. Sir, it is one thing to lambast me as a politician about a secret deal with the IMF. He can talk about my house because I do not mind that. He can talk about the Government buying factories and a lot of foolishness because people feel that this is how politicians relate to each other but there is a strike at the heart of our democracy when a person who is aspiring to lead this country can put it abroad that one of the pillars of our democracy are about to be eroded by the action of the state.

Sir, if there is anything that disqualifies that person, who I would call a villain, if I were not in here, from being contemplated even remotely for leadership, is this latest indiscretion where the good name of Barbados and the reputation of the Royal Barbados Police Force are now being sullied on a matter for which there is not even the most remote shred of evidence. Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that what politics and leadership of this fair land are to be reduced to? Leaders whose skills are in the big lie not only about their political colleagues but now the big lie to tear down the reputation of the most valued institutions that are there to promote and enhance the stability of Barbados. Is that the stairs of milk, as Shakespeare would put it, by which he proposes to ascend to leadership in this land?

Sir, this is too grievous a charge not to be true and too grievous a charge not to be properly answered both in here, out there and at George Street. Is this what they want to send to the top of the queue in this land? Mr. Speaker, Sir, what would become of us in this country if a leadership is to be associated with such devastating untruths about the institutions of this civil society?

Sir, while I am on this matter, may I also urge the media to resist the temptation to go into this type of mode because there seems as though there is a happy hour in Barbados where people want controversy for the sake of controversy rather than talk about what is happening in the country. The police is now having to defend itself and its own from these anonymous letters that are read, without good judgement, that is bringing the police into disrepute and they are having to unfairly defend themselves. Sir, you cannot build a country by weakening its most important institutions.

The Government would be subject to criticism but we expect the media to lead but the media itself has to give a certain reflection as to where it wants to go with controversy for its own sake and the sake of Barbados. There is now an industry of complaining that is now being created where people, in order to be out front of others, have to go for scoops that on sober reflection would say is not worth it. We need to speak to these things because we have come to the end of 38 years of independence where in circumstances other countries are not carrying their independence. Mr. Speaker, in the rest of the Caribbean, countries are wallowing and people are saying the independence was not worth it. In some Caribbean countries people are saying that they would like to be back in colonial practices.

I was once embarrassed when a Caribbean Prime Minister spoke to a European lady and told her that he wanted to become a member of Europe. Sir, as an island 21 x 14, we have done wonderfully well. There are problems in this country which have to be addressed because we are living in challenging times and Government will have to make tough decisions from time to time but Barbados is a good society, with good people and a good Government. Sir, all of us called to public life must carry it forward in a good way but it is not going to be easy. May I say to the House that when I became a professional economist, the things we were dealing with were simple. Ten years ago when I became Prime Minister of this country, issues were less complex than now and ten years from now those who are leading Barbados would have to deal with a far more complex set of economic circumstances that I have to deal with now.

Let this country be in no doubt that we can continue to grow but that we will have to fight for every inch of growth, that is the message I am trying to get across. The measures which are being criticised are not going to flower all at once but I do feel that I am part of a great transformation and that it will lead to the evolution of a more modern Barbados economy whose bases would have been changed by the measures that we have taken one by one to bring about that transformation. Mr. Speaker, this small economy cannot undertake a vast amount of adjustment all at once.

I once asked a learned economist to give a perspective on a new strategic plan for Barbados and he told me to send home 10 000 public servants and it would make Barbados more efficient. I told him it would be a wonderful thing to be able to transform Barbados by just compressing the public service but where would they go to work?

This is the reality because if you displace a worker in a large continental economy, he could go and

find work in another continental economy but this is not so in a small economy. I feel we are putting in place measures for the transformation and I am proud of what this Government has been doing. We do not expect credit for it because some of the changes will not be overnight but we are trying to create a more competitive economy. Sir, we are not only paying attention to the economic aspects of development but we are carrying the social capital with us because every year, we are strengthening our social capital and I think it is going to work.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must therefore, thank the entire society of Barbados for putting at this stage where despite the challenging times, this country is going forward well. I thank them for their tremendous support. Therefore, I must wish everybody a Happy Christmas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I fancy myself as a cook and at Christmas, my friends would expect me to do pepperpot for them. The other side made a lot out of the issue of migrant labour but I wish the Honourable Member for St. Philip West was here because while I am cooking pepperpot for my friends, he would be having his pepperpot cooked for him by his Guyanese maid. I hear a lot of talk about Government is allowing migrant workers to come here and 'mash up' Barbados but I will cook pepperpot for my friends but his pepperpot will be cooked for him by his Guyanese maid.

I want to beg the Attorney-General for a favour. Her passport number is 0907040. She is from Georgetown. I want the Attorney-General to give her amnesty for Christmas. May I also say that he is not outdone by his leader because every time I call the house of the Leader of the Opposition, I hear a lovely, little voice of an Eastern Caribbean person saying, "I am the housekeeper".

Merry Christmas, I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

H49/9:

40 p.m.

Sequence 117

Thursday, December 9, 2004

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

seconded by Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, the Honourable House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. R. D. MARSHALL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

This Honourable House is now in Committee of Supply.

ORDER NO 9

THE GRANT OF SUMS OF MONEY \$9,477,819.00 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO BE PLACED AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE Government TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2004-2005 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO.5, 2004-2005 WHICH FORMS THE SCHEDULE TO THIS RESOLUTION.

HEAD 27

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT-\$3,491,741.00

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Mr. Chairman, this particular Supplementary is being brought to increase the efficiency of a number of areas at the Grantley Adams International Airport. Sir, the first part of this Supplementary for \$3,491,744.00 speaks to the issue of utilities at the Grantley Adams International Airport. The sum of \$796,726.00 is being required to supplement the approved Estimates for the year 2004-2005 and to meet the additional cost of electricity usage in the new check-in counters area in the departure lounge to cover a payment of \$778,954.00 during the period November 2003 to March 2004.

Additionally, there are some issues relating to the maintenance of property and the sum of \$62,784.00 is required to supplement the Estimates. This particular cost is required to meet the increased cost of insurance as a consequence of the additional areas to the terminal buildings at the Grantley Adams International Airport. The new check-in counters and departure halls were valued at a cost of \$19.4 million and the premium for the additional coverage is \$62,784.000.

In addition to that, there are some air traffic management services issues and the sum of \$8,134.00 is required to supplement these Estimates. This money is required to pay the additional responsibility for the Airport Traffic Control Cadets and the sum of \$11,170.00 which is required to meet the cost of National Insurance contributions for these Cadets.

Sir, under the Maintenance and Services Unit, (MDU), a sum of \$112,930.00 is required to meet the cost of utilities. Mr. Chairman, may be the most important issue in this Supplementary has to do with \$2.5 million which is being required for two new parking positions at the Grantley Adams International

Airport. Sir, because of the increase in traffic at the airport and the arrival of aircraft around the same time period, between 1:00 p.m. and 400 p.m., we have found ourselves in a situation where aircraft have to double park or circle the airport.

Sir, therefore, there is a requirement that we have two additional parking positions at the airport.

Sir, with those few words I ask that Head 27 stand part.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

I beg to second that, Sir.

HEAD 32

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE - \$5,986,075.00

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, under this Head, the sum of \$4,485,575 is required to be expended with respect of the Government's contractual obligations for legal hydrographic research consultancies and other corollary associated services that we have had to buy in, services not available to us in Barbados or the region.

In the context of the arbitration proceedings, under the United National Convention on the Law of the Sea, (UNCLOS) with respect to the Barbados/Trinidad and Tobago maritime boundary delimitation and related fisheries dispute, with respect to contingencies, BDS\$1 million is required; a grant towards humanitarian relief efforts to Governments in this region as a consequence of the passage of Hurricane Ivan.

Sir, under Subscriptions and Contributions we are seeking \$500,500 to meet payments of arrears and current assessments to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. These operations are assessed from time to time and all members of the United Nations have to make their contributions. Sir, because there are a number of new Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations across the world, assessments have brought about increases and this represents the payment of arrears of the current assessments arising out of that process in respect of Barbados.

Sir, as you are aware there is now a United Nations Peacekeeping in places like Dafur and in other parts of the world Peacekeeping may be looming again. This is part of the obligation when you are a member of an organisation such as the United Nations.

Sir, we hope that one day this does not apply to us or within our region.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move, in the circumstances, that Head 32 stand part.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

I beg to second that, Sir.

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

H49/ 9:

50 p.m.

Sequence 118

Thursday, December 09, 2004

House 049, sequence 119, 9:

50 p.m.

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, the Resolution was read a first and a second time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government's Business for a rather long session of the last three days, unaccustomed, as it is at this time of the year. I am even more grateful to members of staff of this Parliament for having to operate at this pressure at a time when they may be facing pressure elsewhere in their own arrangements as they prepare for the Christmas Season and the Holidays.

I therefore want to extend the gratitude of all Honourable Members of this Chamber to the staff who serviced us, the police who ensured that we were protected and not the victims of unwarranted attacks, even if they may be, also the media whose job is little easier nowadays because they can write and work from their offices, but even so, they on occasion still turn up to cover key speeches. We would want to thank them for helping to disseminate the message in respect of this debate.

I would wish, Sir, that I was in the happy position to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday, but if I did so today, I would only have to repeat it again on Tuesday, as we are coming back on Tuesday since there are two major Bills which have to be completed before the end of the year. I have communicated this to the Leader of the Opposition and for your own benefit, Sir, the Pension Amendment Bill dealing with the retirement age of public servants as well as the Cricket World Cup Guarantee Bill, both of which are time bound and both of them have to go to the Other Place before the end of the year.

Sir, I am thanking you also, because we thank all of the others but many forget, Sir, that you have a position which requires you to sit in one place, whereas all of us have the liberty to stretch our legs occasionally. In the circumstances, Sir, I think that I would want to use this opportunity to thank you, as well, for your patience and forbearance, in the face of all, over the course of the last three days.

With those words, Sir, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned until Tuesday, December 14, 2004 at 10:00 a.m.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank you and your staff, the police and members of the media for having secured us over the last couple of days and to ensure that we enjoyed a battle that can only strengthen us as politicians. It is part of the journey and something that we need to learn from and we should not incur any personal rancor against each other. Therefore, in light of that, I see it all as part of the experience of growth as a politician.

I thank you, Sir.

The question that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, December 14, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

House 049, sequence 119, 21:

5454