

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 24, 2004.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10:20 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour I.A. ROETT, G.C.M., B.A., Dip.Ed., (Speaker) His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P., (Deputy Speaker) Rt. Hon. OWEN S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.), (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and the Civil Service) Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON, LL.B., (Hons.) Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER, D.A., B.C.H. (Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade) Mr. G.W. GEORGE W. PAYNE Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, B.A.(Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C., J.P. (Minister of Labour and Social Security) Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Public Works and Transport) Mr. R. D. MARSHALL (Chairman of Committees) Hon. H. F. LASHLEY (Minister of Social Transformation) Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development) Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment) Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs, (Leader of the House) Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc., J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs) Hon. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A., (Minister of Tourism and International Transport) Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M.Sc. M.Phil., J.P. (Minister of Energy and Public Utilities) Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc., J.P. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports) Hon.. Miss C. Y. FORDE, L.C.P., J.P. (Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports) Hon. J.X. WALCOTT, M.B., B.S. F.R.C.S., (Edin.), J.P. (Minister of Health) Mr. R.D. JONES, B.A. (Hon), M.A Ed., J.P. Dr. D.C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S. Mr. C.A. MASCOLL, B.Sc.(Econ.) (Hons.), M.A. (Public Finance), (Leader of the Opposition) Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, LL.B., (Hons), L.E.C., (Minister of Industry and International Business) Mr. M.A. LASHLEY, LL.B., (Hons.) Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade) Dr. W.F. DUGUID, B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S., FDRCS., J.P. Mr. R.L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A.

Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, February 17, 2004.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, February 17, 2004, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

PAPERS

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

1. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption)(Fiton Technologies Corp.) Order, 2004.
2. Value Added Tax (Refund)(Gloria Mendes) Order, 2004.

CONGRATULATORY SPEECHES

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, on Independence Day, 2003, a member of this House, a child of Parliament, was elevated to the order of Dame of St. Andrew. It is my pride, honour and pleasure this morning to be able to lead congratulatory statements by this Honourable House on the signal honour that has been conferred on the Honourable Member for the City.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe there was ever before a conferment of this Order that has been more entirely and richly deserved. The Honourable Member for the City has enjoyed many important firsts in the history of this country and, in some respects, in the region and the Commonwealth and that she should have been the first lady ever to hold full Cabinet status will always distinguish her in the history of our public affairs.

Her sterling work in so many international forums has not only brought honour to Barbados but has significantly advanced the cause of mankind in ways that are too important to relate. Sir, we will never forget the distinction she conferred on this country by being the first lady ever to be the head of the Commonwealth Parliament Association.

Mr. Speaker, beyond that, it is not without significance that this Order has been conferred in a year when Bridgetown is celebrating its 375th anniversary. I know the passion with which she has attended to her parliamentary responsibilities as representative for the City of Bridgetown.

I know how greatly inspired she is by the prospect of Bridgetown being fully rehabilitated and being restored to a position of elegant distinction in order to reclaim its place among the leading capital cities in the world. Sir, she has that vision for the transformation of her constituency which in some respects is in part a vision for the transformation of the country.

S22/10:20Sequence 2

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Sir, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, I believe that she would have served as a Foreign Minister for longer than other any other person in the history of Barbados. She is recognised internationally as one of the world's leading Foreign Ministers and that is part of the tremendous record of service and that established the basis for this conferment.

Mr. Speaker, beyond that, the Barbados Labour Party, in my judgement and my time in politics, has had some champions. Building a political institution, as all of us in here know, is not without its trials and tribulations and political parties greatly value those who, no matter what is the cause, can be relied upon for their loyalty, commitment and the ability to continue in the pursuit of a cause, no matter what their personal idiosyncrasies may otherwise cause them to believe.

Sir Harold St. John is another champion in the Barbados Labour Party. There was nothing in the Barbados Labour Party that we would have wanted him to do that he would not have done once it was in consonance with good principles. The Member for The City is, in my judgement, cut from that same political cloth - those who with the minimum of fanfare render the most sterling political service in the building of political institutions. They very often subsume their own ambitions but, at the end of the day, assist in building strong parties that can help to build strong democracies, a person who we would regard as a champion in the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this honour has been fully and richly deserved. It is in recognition of a career of public service splendidly rendered and this morning, it is my high honour to ask the Honourable House to move a Resolution in congratulation of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown on the attainment of this, our national highest honour.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, though it may not appear to be so, it is, in fact, a privilege to rise to contribute to this Resolution. Dame Billie is, in fact, a consummate politician. She is respected and admired in her constituency, across Barbados, regionally and internationally and she does have some outstanding qualities. In fact, her etiquette is remarkable, impeccable. She is stately. When you look at her just physically you can admire the way she carries herself and in her own way she keeps the Opposition in check.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: I say that because lots of us were not born to be in Parliament, we have had to learn on the job and what she does, very quietly, is to insist on certain standards that we have to aspire to and try to maintain. Sir, in her own way, as I said, when you make an error, by way of speech, she is there to correct you.

Mr. Speaker, while it may seem to some to be a means of banter, for me it is an opportunity to listen and learn from a more experienced politician, someone I have come to admire in this Parliament. Sir, that in its own way describes the individual. She is as fierce as an opponent that you would wish to confront but yet she is as gentle in providing advice to the opponent as you could wish from any person. I have come to really respect and admire Dame Billie for the way in which she conducts herself, not only in this Parliament but beyond the shores of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend my first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting last year to represent this country and to listen to persons giving praise to the Foreign Minister of Barbados and recognising the contribution that she has made regionally and internationally.

It really gives me great pleasure to speak this morning on behalf of Dame Billie in recognition of her elevation to such status and to let her know that we on this side, certainly I do, quietly admire her very outstanding qualities and she is very deserving of any other honour bestowed on her.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I commence by saying that I am heartened by the very gracious manner in which the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West delivered himself when he spoke truthfully about the achievements and the honour that the Representative for the City of Bridgetown is so deserving of.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that even before the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown became a Member of this Honourable House, what struck me was, recognising where Barbados was headed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the Honourable Member, long before developing political ambitions, decided to dedicate a lot of her time and life to the cause of family planning.

Many things would obviously be dear to the heart of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, but she would say that before she graced the Floor of this Honourable House, that her commitment was to ensure that the responsible planning of families occurred in Barbados and she gave an enormous amount of time and effort to it, and to this day she maintains a keen interest in it.

Mr. Speaker, it must be said that it would be farsighted of any Barbadian to work towards the question of family planning because if you take into account Barbados' size, resources and population, and you take into account the period of 1780, historians were saying that Barbados had already been over-populated at a time when the sugar industry had started to show decline. Obviously, to prevent the escalation of poverty and the over-population of Barbados, anybody who was interested in the future of this country would have worked tirelessly as the Honourable Member has done towards the cause of family planning. This, in my view, is one of her outstanding achievements before she came to this Honourable House.

Sir, as I recall, all the work she did for the Barbados Family Planning Association, I would like to urge all Barbadians to take the question of family planning seriously, especially in light of the fact that unplanned pregnancies can lead to all sorts of social problems. Suffice to say, for decades the Honourable Member worked to ensure that our people were educated and so educated as to have planned their lives carefully.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention something that occurred under her watch when the Barbados Labour Party took office in this country in 1994.

H22: 10.30 a.m. Sequence 3

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

When we took office in 1994, the way this world was going, in terms of the coming of trade liberalisation, and globalisation, the Honourable Member for the City had a distinction of establishing a full embassy at Geneva, Switzerland.

Geneva, Switzerland can be considered as a city which has attracted a number of international and diplomatic institutions, and under her careful watch, Barbados established a full embassy in Geneva, Switzerland, suitably staffed with certain definitive objectives, and this is one of her many achievements.

I also recall, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member when still a young attorney, deciding to represent a person who could only have prosecuted his appeal right down to the highest court, in what we call, in forma pauperis, a deprived and poor Barbadian whose future was very much on the line. The Honourable Member for the City, in her role as an Attorney-at-Law represented this particular individual, without fee or charge, in an effort to save his life.

The Honourable Member for the City, Mr. Speaker, also has a taste for the environment. I recall vividly that she was of the view that metropolitan Bridgetown should not only be a place where people could live in comfort and businesses operate productively, but that there was a case for developing the environs of Bridgetown in a way to make the environment there more genial, and this is one of her passions.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, she took keen interest in the 375th Anniversary of the City of Bridgetown. She has given a lot of time and effort in this celebration, and I can say that only Sunday, when a first-class cultural presentation was done in her constituency, that those present were careful to say that she had lent her blessing to it and regretted that she could not be there in the physical flesh.

Mr. Speaker, we in this Parliament would also want to note and note with acclaim that the Honourable Member for the City first came to this Honourable House in the year 1976, and she is still here some 28 years after. This is a remarkable achievement. I sometimes wonder if the Honourable Member had to sit and put together her curriculum vitae how much time it would take her, for her career has been characterised by achievement after achievement, and it is only fair that this Honourable

House should note this.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, if I had tendered an encomium here today, in favour of my colleague, then I say that such an encomium is not borrowing any false colouring from flattery. I anticipate a resolution to note her achievements and to congratulate her and I look forward to wholeheartedly supporting this when it comes.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is for me a particular pleasure to rise to offer congratulations to the Honourable Member for the City, on being awarded the highest honour which this country can offer. She is indeed, acclaimed by all, as one of the most outstanding daughters of this country, but it speaks volumes about what we have been able to achieve as a society when her longevity in public life is one which affords this Parliament to have blessing and benefit of several perspectives.

Sir, when the Honourable Member for the City came to this Honourable House for the first time on the 12th May, 1976, many of us as her colleagues were in secondary school. It says that we in Barbados as a country, have been able to evolve a system of governance in which we are able to draw from the more experienced among us, whilst giving opportunity for younger persons to serve, and the results are there to speak for themselves.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that for someone who can lay claim to long years of experience in public life, that the Honourable Member for the City, Dame Billie, is not one who lives in the past. She is not one who spends her time regaling us with stories of past exploits and the way things were, hers is not a message, in that song, Sir, if I could turn back the hands of time, the Honourable Member for the City is one of the most forward looking persons I know. She keeps her gaze firmly fixed on the future. She is one person who already has a vision for the next century, even though we have now embarked on this new century.

In fact, in the 1980s and 1990s, she was one of the first persons who consistently, in all of her messages, Sir, used to be speaking to the new millennium. Colleagues would remember that in Cabinet and other places, she would always say, "in the new millennium". Therefore, to me, that was one of the most remarkable features of the Honourable Member for the City. She brings her considerable experience to bear, while she is looking firmly into the future.

Sir, Billie and Bridgetown, if I could use alliteration, are synonymous. Indeed, when we speak about one, we could as well speak about the other. It is my estimation, Sir, that their fortunes are inextricably linked. In fact, their destinies were twined, even before she was born.

Why do I say that? Sir, her father, just like she is, was one for making firsts. He served in the first Cabinet of Barbados in 1956. Five distinguished gentlemen who shaped modern Government as we know it and their actions, foresight, integrity and excellent public service so rolled the pitch, so conditioned the palate of a fledgling democracy, not yet independent, that there was no crisis of confidence when Barbadians came to the point of having to decide on independence, as there was in other countries where because of the bad experience with early Cabinet Government by the indigenous persons of those countries, there were doubts and fears.

In addition, the destiny of Billie and Bridgetown was firmly twinned when one of the persons whom she succeeded as a member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown was indeed her uncle, Thomas Washington Miller. Indeed, Sir, the City of Bridgetown has been a constituency since 1843 and in addition to Dame Billie Miller, a distinguished representative for that constituency, we have had persons of the calibre of Samuel Jackman Prescod, Charles Duncan O'Neal, Erskine Ward, Mencea Cox, and we could go on. Of course, Ernest Deighton Mottley was the Representative in this Parliament for the City of Bridgetown.

House 22, sequence 4, 10:4015

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

In fact, Bridgetown, as we all know, within its first 150 years of being a city, was one of the most well-known, prosperous and distinguished cities within the colonies of the British Empire. Indeed, it is from Bridgetown that much of the systems of commerce, some outward investments and indeed some individuals would have gone to colonise the Carolinas and other places in northern United States of America. Therefore, in many ways Barbadians colonised and developed the United States of America, and it would do them well to remember that.

Sir, the Honourable Member for the City has had a distinguished political career. Few will forget the tremendous positive impact which her burst on the political scene had in 1976. Many of us, I was a school boy then, but I was following these matters very closely, remember the excitement generated by this stunningly beautiful woman as she strode the streets and avenues of Bridgetown. Since she won the by-election for herself and the Barbados Labour Party on May 12, 1976, she has not looked back. She has taken the vagaries of political life with her usual calm grace and blessed assurance. She knows the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central is wishing me well because he knows what it is like to have a good neighbour. However, Mr. Speaker, today is not about him, it is about the Honourable Member for the City. The Honourable Member for the City has remained committed to public service whether in Government or out of Government, whether through Government or through civil society or whether through those or through her profession and her personal life.

In addition to all of her international commitments and recognitions, one of her several loves is the Salvation Army. On the rare occasion that she delves into the past, because the Honourable Member said that she is such a very forward-thinking person, she always speaks very fondly of the Salvation Army and of her association with that institution. One of the things she looks forward to most is working with the Salvation Army as it does its outreach programme particularly in the City of Bridgetown.

The Honourable Member for St. James North spoke about her work with the International Planned Parenthood Federation. In that regard, hers was not just a local commitment. Her work in that major non-governmental organisation has been recognised internationally. In fact, from the distance of Barbados, she was the chairperson of the committee responsible for the 1994 non-governmental organisation International Planned Parenthood Federation meeting which was held in Cairo, Egypt.

Mr. Speaker, her acclaim does not stop there. I was involved in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association since 1994, for Dame Billie it would have been much longer, and I remember well that she created history by being the first woman to be elected as the international chairman of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Honourable Members on both sides would know firsthand as you would, Mr. Speaker, of the excellent manner in which she conducted the affairs of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I believe that recognition by way of the position of international Chairman was a fitting tribute for someone who, to my mind, is a consummate democrat. She is committed to the purest ideals of democracy. Persons involved in politics generally as parliamentarians are well aware of these high principles which have guided her even tone and tenure whether in Government or out of Government.

We heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West speak of the fact that she is free with her advice and best wishes to persons not only on her side but to the young parliamentarians on the Other Side, at least to those who are willing to learn because I cannot speak for all of them. We must not forget that even in her stateliness, in her capacity for good governance and for fairness and her ability to conduct herself on the international stage that Billie was also very good in the aspect of democracy, that is, in the realm of electoral politics.

Billie has been one of the most loved, most listened to platform speakers in Barbados. In fact, she has probably changed her pace a bit over the years. As you know, Sir, bowlers may go from fast-bowling to seaming and to some swinging. However, none of us can forget the heat, the pace and the number of political wickets which she took in the first 10 to 20 years of her career especially in the 1976 period.

She was a fiery platform speaker, but even within that, she is one of the most loved persons across all sides. Some would admit and some may not admit it, Sir, but she has been able to mix the fire and the passion of politics with a genuine love for the people as well as a commitment to the ideals of democratic governance.

Those personal qualities have served her well in all of the several ministerial portfolios she has held. In 1976 she was Minister of Health and National Insurance, in 1981 she was Minister of Education, in 1994 she was Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business, in 1995 she was Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport and from 1999 she is Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

All of us can attest to the fact that in each and every one of those portfolios she has been an outstanding Minister. The people of the City have been the beneficiary over the past 25 years, 22 years in the House and three years in the Senate, of solid representation by the Honourable Member. She has been at the helm of a great movement for the revitalisation and transformation of the City both as a place to do business as well as a place to live.

We must not forget that the first concrete roads in Barbados were built in the City of Bridgetown because when the Honourable Member took over as Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown there were many mud tracks and rocky roads.

House 22 Sequence 5

10:50 a.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, there was a great need for improved housing and job creation, and the Honourable Member for the City has responded. She has improved the lives of her people, as good representatives are required to do by looking after projects such as the rehabilitation of Baxters Road, a place the Honourable Member loves dearly, the new Swan Street, the Wickham/Lewis Boardwalk or the rebuilt Cheapside Market.

Sir, Honourable Members might not remember what this current East Wing of Parliament, in which we are presently standing, was like before. Sir, I will speak to the Honourable Member's interest in architecture and construction matters but we like to refer to her as a frustrated contractor. If there is anything that she loves as much as politics, it is the building trade. It is rumoured, and I believe the rumour to be true, that the Honourable Member visits the works that are being carried out.

Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Tom Adams, had put her in charge of the work to oversee the improvement to the House. The workmen said that they were plastering these walls and that Dame Billie came in, took up a hatchet and had started chipping away at the walls. The men said they were in shock and had asked her what was she doing.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Dame Billie has always had an appreciation for excellence in architecture. We rely heavily on her to give her perspectives on buildings and heritage matters and this work today is based on her vision.

Mr. Speaker, I know that one of the best things that this Parliament could do to make Dame Billie an even happier person, is for us to move with the greatest alacrity to complete the work of the West Wing of Parliament. I know that Dame Billie would be as happy to play the lead role as contractor-general in an honorary capacity, to restore that building, to press it into active service, in the way that she has been for this Wing. Sir, it provides an outward and visible sign of our democracy, which, at the end of the day, is an inward philosophy to which we are all committed.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of her work in the City, several recreational facilities such as at Murphy's Pasture and the hard courts at the Westbury Primary School, have been the work of the Honourable Member. In fact, at Chancery Lane, St. Michael, opposite the Boat Yard, next to the London Bourne Towers, the hard courts for that recreational facility have been put in by the insistence of the Honourable Member.

Sir, that brings us to the question of housing and how the Honourable Member has been able to improve housing conditions in the City, lest no one forgets that living conditions in the City had, in the early part of the second half of the 20th Century, lagged behind those of the rest of the country.

Sir, through the vision of the Honourable Member for the City, we have seen the development at Kensington Lodge and the excellently-built London Bourne Towers. In fact, as one passes there, one would have believed that these luxury condominiums are owned by the rich and famous. They could not believe that an Honourable Member of Parliament could have had such vision to have moved on the behalf of her people and to have given them such a standard of housing, as ordinary working-class Barbadian, which is the envy of even the rich and famous. Sir, that perhaps speaks to her concept of the City and to her people.

The Honourable Member firmly believes, and has always expressed the view, that the quality of our City is not to be judged merely by its commercial structures, as important as they are, but that Bridgetown is a lived-in City. In fact, one of the things that she has been trying to do, is to have more people living in Bridgetown, and the way to do that is to improve its quality.

Therefore, all of the work which the Honourable Member has done as constituency representative for the City has been geared, by and large, to improving the physical, social, and political circumstances of the residents of the City. Sir, for that, I am sure that they are most happy and grateful.

Sir, I believe I have said enough to let this Parliament know that I am extremely proud and that I deem it a high honour and a great privilege to have been able to serve with such a stalwart, such a distinguished worker in the international non-governmental organisation community and such a distinguished politician but, most importantly, to have served with such a decent person. Sir, at the end of the day, let us not forget that Dame Billie is not just a public persona but an individual. She is one to whom I have the deepest admiration, love and regards and in a private capacity, she is a very warm and loving person.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the conferment of the highest honour which this land can afford to the Honourable Member, has been properly placed on one of its most distinguished daughters. Sir, I offer my congratulations to the Honourable Member for the City.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this issue and to say that, unlike others, the memory that I would like to remember of the Honourable Member for the City is one which I think you too would remember. Sir, that memory is one while we were visiting on a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association mission, of which the Honourable Member for the City was in charge. At that meeting, she was able to have put an Honourable gentleman, Mr. Hector McClean, who everybody was scared of, in his place. This took place in Trinidad and Tobago and not anywhere outside the Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, I also felt that it was because of the support that the Honourable Member had received from Your Honour and from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, that it had encouraged the First

Secretary of Tobago to have used the opportunity and had given him a tongue-lashing in front of everybody who were visiting on that occasion.

H:No. 22 (6)1100 a.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

In 1976, when Dame Billie came to this House, many young men in the community admired her beauty and the way she carried herself. Sir, being on the other side of the fence, she was also a street fighter and you had to be prepared to defend yourself from her as she might give you a tongue-lashing if she felt you were offending her Party. She was committed to her Party in this Parliament but outside of Barbados she was different and if you were going in the wrong direction, she would pull you aside and give you the necessary advice.

Mr. Speaker, I have been privileged to be given advice in the corridors of this Parliament by Dame Billie and, upon reflection, I realised it was 100 per cent correct. Therefore, young politicians must understand that there will be advice given by senior members because they see potential and they want to harness it so that it is not wasted. Sir, I believe that the Honourable Member for the City got her qualities from the past Honourable Member for Christ Church South because there is no doubt that he knew the direction that a debate would take.

Mr. Speaker, she is absolutely committed to her Party and is well-known for defending it. Sir, anyone who represents the City of Bridgetown has a particular quality because it is made up of the absolute rich and the absolute poor and this means there is a demand from both these sectors and one has to provide a balance.

Sir, I do not envy the Honourable Member for the City because it is a role that I would not like to have on my shoulders. When one hears the theoretical thoughts of the Honourable Member for the City and then balance that with the practical aspects of the Party, one can understand why she is so vocal on things that need to be done in her constituency.

I want to say that the honour given to her is well-deserving. I did not wait for this occasion that politicians use to grandstand but I have already put my particular feelings on this issue in the public domain through my newspaper column. Sir, I can assure you that what I said here today concurs with what I have already written in black and white.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I did not sound my voice in this session of congratulatory speeches for Dame Billie Antoinette Miller, the distinguished Honourable Member for the City. She is an individual who is held in the highest esteem by all persons in this country of all political persuasions, educational and socio-economic background and all denominations, even those who had reason to disagree with some of the things she said.

Sir, at the end of the day, all of us in Barbados cherish the Honourable Member for the City. Dame Billie is also cherished by the region. I can attest to that because she has distinguished herself as a member of the international community and in so doing has been able to give this small country of ours due recognition in the regional and international community.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the good fortune, in my short time in politics, to have been part of delegations led by the Honourable Member for the City. I was part of the delegation led by the Honourable Member for the City to the Seattle Round of WTO talks and based on the level of respect given to the Honourable Member for the City, before persons spoke, and sometimes during the delivery of their speeches would look in the direction of the Honourable Member for the City, simply for a nod of approval for the types of intervention which they should make.

Mr. Speaker, at any stage if we approached a point of stalemate or deadlock, even if the Honourable Member for the City was not in the Chair, the individual in the Chair, in search of wise counsel to take the meetings forward, would ask for an opinion from the Honourable Member for the City.

Sir, at the important, international talks within the context of WTO in Seattle, before the talks came to an end, the contribution of the Honourable Member for the City on international trade matters, be it related to agriculture or whatever, was worthy of the highest recognition. Once again, Dame Billie would have done this small country extremely proud.

H21/11:10

Sequence 7

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. A.P. WOOD:

Mr. Speaker, for someone to endure an occupation for 28 years, an occupation as a politician, is not an achievement to be taken lightly. Sir, you have been involved in political business for the third term now and you have a good appreciation for what is involved in the type of hectic pace that we are called upon to function on some occasions, and the wear and tear of life in politics for 5, 15 or 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, for someone to have lasted 28 years, 1976 to current, says something about the character of that individual but, more important, it says a lot about the commitment that individual would have given and continued during the period of those 28 years to the development to the City and to the development of this nation along every conceivable dimension, and through her efforts in the regional and international community, certainly to the development of the hemisphere. In so doing, the Honourable Member has been able to get due recognition for this country.

Mr. Speaker, during the Honourable Member for the City's long and very distinguished career as a politician, it has not been all plain sailing. Yes, she would have reached tremendous success during those years but the mark of a strong person is in the event that they had to face disappointment, to be able to bounce back and to treat those who might have not supported her in a manner expected, to treat

them no less different from during the years when they showered her with the support and praise that she so richly deserves.

I recall, during the period 1986 to 1991 when the numbers on the Barbados Labour Party's side in this Honourable Chamber were few and on the Other Side the numbers were few as well, I remember that period very well because it was, perhaps, a time when I was paying more attention to the political dynamics in this country. I remember the contributions made by the Honourable Member for the City, not only in promoting and preserving democratic principles in Barbados, but through her efforts, aimed at rebuilding the Barbados Labor Party to ensure that the Party was able to bounce back within a short period. This Barbados Labor Party that we all love dearly, owes persons like the Honourable Member for the City a debt of gratitude, one that cannot be quantified.

Mr. Speaker, for all of us who would have come to this Honourable House after the 1991-1994 period, when we reflect on the efforts made during that period, not only by herself but many others, we have to conclude that it is through those efforts the Barbados Labour Party was able to bounce back and regained some support by 1991 and to increase that support to be returned to power, and as the saying goes, the rest is history.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that all of us would have admired and continue to admire about Dame Billie Miller, is her debating skill. She has been, from the beginning, a very fierce debater in and outside of this Chamber and it is known by the quality of her political platform speeches. I remember that persons look at the list of the various speakers at the various political meetings. Certainly, in my constituency, the women, especially, would ask, "Is Billie coming up here to speak tonight?" "Could you find out what time she is coming to speak because we come to hear Billie Miller?"

Sir, I want to thank her for coming to St, Philip South, at the beginning of the last political campaign and closing the meeting that we had at Six Cross Roads. I can assure you that there were many female, young and old, sat patiently awaiting the start of the Honourable Member for the City's speech. Sir, as usual, it was very well delivered.

Sir, Honourable Members who spoke made mention of another excellent quality of the Honourable Member for the City, that is her ability to give advice freely, both in and out of this Honourable Chamber. She is always encouraging Members to uphold the ideals and standards of this Parliament. She is also encouraging Members to do a bit of research before coming into the Honourable Chamber so that the speeches are as informative as we would want them to be in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, some might argue, with some justification, that some Honourable Members are not taking the advice rendered by the Honourable Member to prepare themselves properly for their speeches, but it remains that most of us accept that it is very extremely important to listen to someone as experienced as the Honourable Member for the City when she is rendering such advice.

Sir, another quality of the Honourable Member for the City is her unswerving and unstinting support for the less privileged in Barbadian society. I do not know if it has to do with the fact that she represents a constituency like the City that has, in very close proximity to each other, the business class and persons who reside there and are not being considered to be very wealthy.

Sir, over those 28 years the Honourable Member has been very steadfast, unswerving in her commitment to the development of the less fortunate in the constituency of the City and in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, when I worked at the Ministry of Agriculture, I got a greater understanding of how the Honourable Member thinks.

The Barbados Labour Party and, indeed, all Governments should act in pursuance of an improvement of the quality of life of these small business persons in the City.

For example, the fish vendors at Baxters Road, and this is no idle boast. This Honourable Lady has, over the years, been fighting for the activity of the small fish vendors at Baxters Road to be given a higher profile via the provision of proper facilities for them to ply their trade, and she has remained committed to seeing that come to fruition, also the treatment of the vendors at the Cheapside Market and the Rastafarian craftsmen.

H21 : 11.20 a.m

Sequence 8

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. A.P. Wood:

We know that part and parcel of the plans to redevelop the lower sections of Bridgetown included the rehabilitation of the Cheapside Market. The Honourable Member for the City would have been very strident in her call for that rehabilitation of the Cheapside Market to have taken place, but it does not stop there.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is also very strident in her call for a proper facility to be made available for the Rastafarian craftsmen to function at the Miller site, just opposite the rehabilitated Cheapside Market. I am certain that before her time comes to an end in active political life that this facility would see the light of day.

Mr. Speaker, mention was made earlier about the first concrete road being constructed in the City, but that was a long time ago, the precise year of its construction escapes me now, but I think it was sometime in the 1960s. What I can tell you is that when the Government embarked on a concrete road programme a couple of years ago, it brought tremendous joy to the heart of the Honourable Member for the City. In my short time, the Honourable Member for the City would have been heralding and certainly would have been making another strident call for the Government to introduce such surfaces in Barbados.

We can say that the introduction of the concrete road programme, a couple of years ago, was as a result, in some measure, to the constant and consistent noises being made by the Honourable Member for the City and that programme has been very well received by all Barbadians.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want, on behalf of all of my constituents, because this is a lady that we are very proud of, and I want to enter into the records of this Honourable Chamber, the sentiments of

the people of St. Philip South, whom I proudly represent and, indeed, on behalf of my family, we want to congratulate the Honourable Member for the City for the immense contribution she has made to the political, social, educational, cultural and economic development of Barbados.

Let me also congratulate her for her contribution to the regional, social and economic progress and the manner in which, by her very hard work, she has been able to gain due recognition for this country that we all love so dearly.

Therefore, Dame Billie Miller, we salute you. We have learnt a lot from your efforts. You certainly are a living example of what this country has to offer by its human resources potential. I am certain that many of us in here and outside will continue to draw inspiration and spirit from the way you have conducted your business in this Chamber, outside of this Chamber, in the region and in the international community. We salute you.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to add my voice to the congratulatory tones of all Honourable Members who have just spoken. We have had the use of historical flashbacks, imagery, an attempt at alliteration, the use of the metaphor and so many other pieces of language, so conjoined, to give description to the contribution of Dame Billie Miller.

I am not as fortunate as those on the Other Side who would have either sat with her, travelled with her, in her presence for any length of time and avail myself of the kind of conversation and discourse that she is noted for, but I remember some 22 years ago, in her capacity as one of the leading advocates on population activities, that she was instrumental in convening, what in those days was the first young people's parliamentary forum in Queen's Park. I do not know if she remembers this. At that time, I sat in the Opposition to the question which was being put. I do not know if that was potent to what is happening now.

Nevertheless, as I rose then to speak, I saw from her, an expression of delight, and I said that, well, Ronald, maybe this is your beginning, because if you could generate that expression of delight in hitherto a staid appearance, maybe, somewhere down the road, you might still be able to generate that delight in your verbal pronouncements in this House.

Thus far, I have not received any upbraiding from her for any breach of language, any breach of etiquette or any breach of behaviour, so, maybe, in fact, I am travelling in the correct trajectory, as testimony to that early beginning.

Those Honourable Members who have spoken so far, essentially spoke about her character and her spirit. As the Honourable Member for St. Philip South has stated, in fact, it takes an extremely strong character and an extremely strong spirit to be involved in politics in Barbados or politics anywhere in the world, but more particularly in Barbados, when politicians are derided. They are cast aside as useless, as they finish their journey in representation of the people and I am hoping, that as the Dear Dame, the Honourable Member for City makes her exit, whenever that is, that she would not be treated with the same type of ignominy and levels of behaviour that so many others, who have made outstanding contributions to this country, have been treated and are still currently treated.

In Barbados, we need to change that kind of behaviour and approach to those who served on behalf of the people, regardless of which political persuasion they come.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: I am hoping that as we pronounce and speak about the contributions of Dame Billie, that we would reflect on all of those who have served this country, those who were called to service and who, regardless of their strength, made a contribution to the delivery of Barbados and to the type of country we have today.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: I speak very strongly to that and I would hope that it has the support of all of those in this House and in Barbados. We do not treat those well who have left these Chambers, both here and in the Other Place, in this country. If we do not treat our people well, then we cannot treat ourselves well. It is quid pro quo, in that kind of situation.

House 22, sequence 9, 11:3014

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES:

Therefore, as we address the contribution of Dame Billie let us, as a nation, look further than these Chambers into the wider Barbadian community to generate a level of respect and give to the people their value and their worth as they work for the elevation and further development of Barbados. That is necessary and is needed at this time.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to treat ourselves the way we do in this House and then expect others to treat us differently. We have to set the standards and the foundation on which the nation can build. There are many persons who look across the divide when we make our contributions when we have to be sharp with the use of the tongue to demonstrate our objection to a particular level of pronouncement or debate who draws the conclusion that we are at war, so in their ignorance, in the true generic meaning of the word, they go out into the wider community and demonstrate behaviours which are not in keeping with what we truly want as a people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, in the midst of all the crises engulfing this country and others in the Caribbean we need every one of our people to be galvanised into action to draw from the best talents that we can find in Barbados to defend the territorial and national integrity of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, Dame Billie is a lady whom over the years I have had the most profound respect for although we wear different cloth. I am talking about political cloth, which is understood. Mr. Speaker, we have to respect those who are of a different complexion. When we meet in the huskings, we can then trade blows because as we search to deal with the issues of the Barbadian people, we have to put our messages to persuade them that we are worthy of their hire for that given point in time. I am

hoping that as Dame Billie comes to grip with the issues which now involve the mind and the being of all Barbadians, that she would look into every nook and cranny of this country and utilise every talent she can find to deliver our country from the clutches of those who would want to bastardise us as a nation.

As Honourable Members, we must salute persons such as Dame Billie and all other honourable persons who have made the kind of sterling and outstanding contributions she has made to this country.

Mr. Speaker, I know that sometimes we can go overboard in giving praises and at one time during this debate I thought that the Honourable Members on the Other Side who were speaking were about to step off into lascivious pronouncements relative to terms of body language and expressions of love.

I was sitting on the edge of my seat hoping that they would understand still that we were in the House and that a certain level of decorum must still obtain. I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that even though they stepped on the brink, they maintained that level of dignity which was important.

Mr. Speaker, Ralph Waldo Emerson said that the rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain, the fern and the leaves their modest epitaph in coal. Therefore, I would hope that the contribution of Dame Billie, the Honourable Member for the City, would be regaled in our political history.

I thank you.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and great pleasure to make a contribution of congratulation to the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, not only because of her sterling contribution to the City of Bridgetown, and to the people of Barbados by extension, but because she is my blood relative, my cousin. Her grandfather and my great grandfather are indeed one and the same person, so I feel a sense of great pride to be able to make this contribution today.

Mr. Speaker, we follow in the great Miller tradition. Freddie Miller, Tommy Miller and now the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, Billie Miller. I am not a Miller by name but I am a Miller by blood. The Millers are certainly fighters for the underprivileged and I join the Honourable Member for the City in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, Dame Billie has shown time and time again in everything she does to be there for the underprivileged and to be a representative for the City of Bridgetown like none other. Time and time again she has shown that when she sets her goal she would stand at nothing and let nothing put her aside in achieving those goals.

Mr. Speaker, as a young boy I remember - and this is something I see every day - when she brought the Drug Service to Barbados when she was Minister of Health. This Barbados Drug Service has been going for years and continues to be a model programme for the world. People from all walks of life from different countries in the world came to Barbados to study this programme that was implemented by the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

This Barbados Drug Service is a programme that touches people from all walks of life in Barbados. Children under 16 years of age, people over 65 years of age and people who may have chronic illnesses

benefit from this programme.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Drug Service is a tremendous programme that continues to benefit Barbadians from then to now. Yes, it has its critics and, yes, it has its weaknesses which need to be strengthened, but this programme shows the vision and the foresight that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown had.

Therefore, I continue to be proud and continue to be struck in awe at the way in which she continues her sterling service not only to the City of Bridgetown but to the people of Barbados in her capacity as a previous Minister of Education and now as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Her achievements, which were mentioned by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, are wide and vast.

He spoke about her achievements such as the celebrations for the 375th Anniversary of the City of Bridgetown, the rehabilitation of Bridgetown and of course her pride and joy, the London Bourne Towers and Kensington Lodge which provided housing for the people of the City. These are some of the things which I have to get up and say.

Mr. Speaker, very few people would know that it was through the Honourable Member for the City that I came to elective politics. If one were to go and look at my application form to become a member of the Barbados Labour Party, one would see that it is the Honourable Member for the City who proposed me as a member of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, I must say though that at the time my family was suggesting that I should move to the Other Side, but it was through her wisdom and her vision that she did the correct thing and pointed me on the correct path which I am thankful to her for even today because this Barbados Labour Party continues to be a party that is providing significant leadership and excellent governance to the people of Barbados, so I thank her for that.

House 22 Sequence 10

11:40 a.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Dr. W. F. DUGUID:

Mr. Speaker, not only has the Honourable Member for the City pointed me to the correct path, but she continues to give me advice. I also heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy saying that she gives him advice too, which I think is excellent because it shows the magnitude of the lady.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for the City continues to give me advice on the right things to do; the things to do to keep the constituency moving; the way to service the constituents; the way in which I carry myself in Parliament and all of the correct things and protocols that one must know about. I thank her for all that she has done for me, both in my political and professional careers.

Mr. Speaker, few persons would know that when I first thought of coming to public life, the Honourable Member for the City gave me advice that I will remember until death. She said to me: "Make yourself a professional person first. There is nothing magical about coming to public life early. When you make yourself a good professional person, then the people around you can benefit more from what you can do for them."

Mr. Speaker, it was through those kind words that I was able to make myself strong both professionally and politically.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that all the constituents of Christ Church West would join with me in congratulating her on achieving that great and noble award. Sir, from the people of the City of Bridgetown and from the people of Barbados, I want to say "thank you" to the Honourable Member for the City, for doing all that she has done for us. We are always proud when we see her in her professional capacity. She has done us proud and is truly a states-person with none other on par.

I also want to say "thank you" from the Miller, the Duguid, the Seale and the Lashley families, and hope that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown continues to provide sterling service.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward every Tuesday as I come to this Honourable House, to share this hallow Chamber with her. I listen and learn from her every word. I know that the Honourable Members on the Other Side listen to her too and have learned from the contributions that she makes.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke from the heart today because it is truly an emotional time, a time that I should always treasure. I thank you for the opportunity for making this contribution.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I wish to add congratulatory comments to the debate and to extend sincere congratulations to the Honourable Member for the City, Dame Billie.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Dame Billie possesses excellent qualities. I can speak very strongly of the relationship that I have had with her from the 1970s in the Barbados Labour Party and, indeed, those wonderful environs that we have at 111 Roebuck Street.

Mr. Speaker, it is at that time that I have developed an admiration for Dame Billie, as a very young woman. In the background of politics, I admire her for the special attention that was placed on the rank and file of the Barbados Labour Party and the outstanding role she has always played in her involvement at all levels of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, at all levels, the rank and file could rely on her for guidance and, therefore, it is no small wonder that at this time Dame Billie continues to have that close contact with the rank and file and is now Chairman (Ag.) for the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, Dame Billie carries many firsts, and I would wish to make mention of three: First, as the first female Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown, secondly, as the first female Cabinet Member in Barbados of which I am aware, and thirdly, as the first politician to be honoured as a Dame in this country.

I want to support the comments that were made by the Honourable Members on the Other Side because many persons are of the view that politicians only act in that period of time that he or she is

given the opportunity to perform, and then many of them are put into the book of forgetfulness. Many Barbadians tend to have short memories and, therefore, as long as politicians are not actively participating as Members of Parliament, they are then put on the back burner and people say all sorts of evil things about them.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to endorse many of the comments made by other Honourable Members in congratulating Dame Billie for the honour that has been placed on her.

The Honourable Member for the City has left indelible marks in the Ministries, in particular, the Ministries of Education and Health. I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West speaking to her involvement in the Barbados Drug Service but I would want to speak to health generally, and to the advancements that we in Barbados have made, as a result of her inputs as Minister of Health during the 1980s. I know of her involvement when she spoke of the nutrition that our children deserve.

The Honourable Member for St. James North has made mention of her involvement in family planning. Indeed, there are very few women coming though the last 50 years, who would have been able to achieve so much by her involvement in the activities of this country. Therefore, Dame Billie needs to be highly commended for her commitment and dedication to the growth and development of Barbadians, particularly as it relates to people's health.

Mr. Speaker, polyclinics and other health care facilities would have expanded under her tenure in the Ministry of Health and, indeed, in the Ministry of Education. There are so many areas in which the Honourable Member would have been able to advocate for the education of Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely impressed by the performance of Dame Billie, especially when it comes to the people of the City and the love and commitment she has in serving their interest. I must say that there are times when I hear her making requests for things to remain as they were, that many Barbadians might consider to be out of the system.

Dame Billie speaks to the importance of the standpipe and to some of the alleys in Bridgetown and why they should remain as they are. She would also speak to the issue of public baths, most of which have been closed, and makes the point that there are many persons who are living in the City who are below the poverty line that are still in need of the public baths remaining open.

Mr. Speaker, the only way that the Honourable Member for the City would have been able to make that kind of request and to be determined about it, was that she would have been doing her ground work to ensure that those individuals living within those communities who did not have pipe water, would have been able to access that public bath.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for the City has made extremely good strides in helping the Government of the day to set up the Sewerage Plant in Bridgetown. Another issue was that of the relocation of persons from Emmerton Lane to Clapham. The Honourable Member was instrumental, working in close association with those persons to help them to understand better, the reason why sections of Emmerton Lane had to go because of the benefit that the Sewerage Plant would have made to the people of Barbados in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for the City continues to speak very boldly for the vendors at Baxters Road. Again her ears are to the ground and that is significant, if one wants to remain a politician.

H:No.22 (11)1150 a.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss. C. Y. FORDE:

Mr. Speaker, it is with great admiration that I speak of Dame Billie today. When she came to the fore in 1976 in the by-elections, many Barbadians recognised their potential and women understood that they did not only have to serve in political parties by doing mundane things but that they could also aspire to becoming leaders of the highest level.

Therefore, Dame Billie's example is one that should be emulated by other women and over the years many women have come to the fore because of one woman climbing the ladder to the highest level. Sir, I want to thank Dame Billie for giving women that kind of inspiration.

Mr. Speaker, I had the distinct privilege of working closely with Dame Billie in the Barbados Labour Party as a member of the National Council and my heart was blessed to see how efficiently she manages the work of that Council. I also worked with her in the 50th Anniversary of the Barbados Labour Party which was a tremendous success. I then worked with her in the by-election in 1985 and I learnt how to better canvas as a result of taking guidance from her as a mature politician. Mr. Speaker, this gave me inspiration and I have used the strategies she employed when I came into the political arena.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Dame Billie is respected locally, regionally and internationally. It is a joy to attend conferences or go on a holiday overseas and hear everyone ask you to give their regard to the Honourable Member for the City. Sir, Dame Billie has a strong character and everyone is fond of her.

Mr. Speaker, Dame Billie has performed exceptionally well because these kinds of honours are not given out willy-nilly. Indeed, no one can question her capacity as an attorney-at-law or as a minister because she has been one of the most outstanding Ministers in this country. Sir, the people of the City of Bridgetown have voted resoundingly for her seven times and if Dame Billie came again as a candidate, the people of the City would vote for her because they know that she has their interest at heart.

When we speak of Kensington Lodge, Pondsides, London Bourne Towers, the Boardwalk and the Urban Renewal Project, we speak of Dame Billie. Sir, whether at a session in the Barbados Labour Party headquarters, at Cabinet or a community meeting, Dame Billie speaks about the renewal of life in the City during the day or night.

Her performance has been so outstanding that Barbadians at all levels in this country were happy and impressed at the opportunity for her to be recognised as Dame of St. Andrew.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate her on this special occasion and I ask God that as he adds years to her life that he would add life to her years so that she can continue in whatever sphere of political life to offer service to the country of Barbados and the rest of the world because she has the capacity, ability and decorum to offer service to the country of Barbados and the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, with those few comments I congratulate the Honourable Member, Dame Billie.

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of St. Michael West and myself, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Member for the City on the receipt of this most deserved honour. I share the view that politicians are generally worthy of the highest honour. Further, I share the view that, sadly, these honours are too insufficiently rendered and that when they are conferred infrequently, they do not take on the highest form or fashion. It is from this perspective that I am especially glad to associate myself with the sentiments being expressed in this House this morning with reference to the Honourable Member for the City.

The Honourable Member for the City, from my own experience, is very highly esteemed and respected at home and abroad. Sir, even in quarters where she is not loved at home, she is still respected. In my travel abroad on behalf of the Government, people come up to me and seek to make a point of contact or reference to the people of Barbados and generally, they first mention Gary Sobers and inevitably the name Billie Miller even before the name of our Prime Minister.

This speaks to the fact that she has been active in the foreign service of Barbados as Foreign Minister but, beyond that, it speaks to the quality of service which she has rendered, the way she has conducted herself in pursuit of the affairs of this Government abroad and her own domestic political duties here at home.

Sir, her achievements are quite significant and are noted. They have already been lauded in here this morning and I want to join with those who have saluted the Honourable Member with reference to these.

Her service has been abundant and evident and is highly recognised, not only with reference to the length of the service, but especially to the quality of service which has been rendered in the cause of this country for which she must be highly praised.

Her role as a Cabinet Minister in various portfolios from time to time is also quite known and the country continues to see the benefits of such. Honourable Members have mentioned health but my last impression is in the area of education especially with reference to the development of our primary educational institution and the physical plant associated with that. Her achievements have been remarkable and worthy of the highest praise.

I cannot speak of political longevity as yet. Mr. Speaker, you might be better able to speak about it but certainly to survive as a political representative in St. Michael for this length of time does not only require considerable skill and resources but also requires some political acumen.

Sequence 12

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

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

There must be a sense of lasting appreciation at the hearts of the people that translates itself into repeated votes at the polls, giving her the popular acclaim which she has enjoyed in the City of Bridgetown, the heart of St. Michael over these years. That is a most significant achievement. Mr. Speaker, I am sure you can identify with the view that I am trying to express.

Sir, it seems to me that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown has learned the art of walking at ease with royalty, while at the same time being able to speak the language of the common man. That is not an easy achievement and that is not something which all of us can be commonly credited with, to be able to walk and to be at ease with those who are royal and yet to speak the language of the common man in such terms that he can understand your message, buy into your agenda and understand that you represent his interest. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has been able to achieve that and I would want to suggest that this is part of her secret for her success.

Sir, when the history of Bridgetown is rewritten it will inevitably be seen in part to be the story of the Honourable Member for the City, whether they refer to infrastructure, housing, markets or commerce, this history of Bridgetown, especially the modern Bridgetown, is very much a part of the story of the Honourable Member for the City.

Mr. Speaker, I have said on political platforms and in private conversations to persons that the name of the Honourable Member for the City is synonymous with the name of our capital City, Bridgetown, and as the Honourable Member for Christ Church East suggested, the two are inseparable.

Mr. Speaker, I owe a personal debt and gratitude to the Honourable Member for the City. I clearly recalled in 1993, after I attended a Barbados Labour Party Conference, the Honourable Member came to me and asked me if I had any interest in elective politics. It was only in the quiet counsel of my heart that possibility was being explored and she would not have been aware of that. I remembered distinctly saying to her that I was thinking of that and if I do decide to go in that direction, it would not be next time around but, perhaps, the time after that. I will never forget that she said to me that, I think 1976, the then Leader of Barbados Labour Party, Mr. Tom Adams, said to her inquiring of her own interest in elective politics, that now was the time.

Mr. Speaker, although I cannot suggest to you that her conversation with me caused me to make up my mind then, it certainly helped me to clarify my own thinking on the issue. Of course, ultimately, Mr. Speaker, you would understand that I waited on the Lord. Sir, that confirmation duly came and I think that the people of St. Michael identify with the Honourable Member for the City that, perhaps, there was some prudence in taking that initiative and stepping into elective politics. As a result of my conversation with the Honourable Member for the City, the constituents of St. Michael West and my good Lord, I am here today at your grace.

Sir, I am indebted to her. The Honourable Member has encouraged me then and has encouraged me ever since. She is one with ready advice for young Parliamentarians on either side of the fence, and that is the impression which I have had. Mr. Speaker, as we are aware, the Honourable Member and I share a common border along Roebuck Street, Country Road, Passage Road and Westbury Road.

We not only share that border but the Honourable Member was so kind as to walk those roads with me, especially in 1999 when I was quite new to politics, and helped me to garner support. I was able to pick up a few tips here and there how I needed to do what had to be done in order to be successful. Therefore, in that respect, I am indebted further to her.

Sir, there are a few things beyond that which struck me about the Honourable Member for the City. One of them is her obvious commitment to the party of choice, that is a thing to be applauded but it is a thing to be seen in a proper perspective. I believe that she has grasped a proper perspective and her commitment is not just to blind loyalty but a commitment based on a recognition of admission that the Party, of which I am a member, stand for representing properly the interest of the people, tomorrow and the future.

The Honourable Member is very much committed to that cause because she recognises that the cause of the people is to be associated with a cause of a party of which she is a part and her Party loyalty is obvious and that has impressed me.

Sir, her sense of parliamentary culture and tradition, her passion for ensuring that the dignity and culture of the institutions of Parliament are maintained. Sir, this is something which impresses a young Parliamentarian coming to these Chambers in the early stage of his or her parliamentary life.

Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself with the sentiments being expressed this morning to suggest that this honour is, in fact, very well deserved and I very much compliment the Honourable Member for the City.

I thank you.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer compliments and heartiest congratulations to the Honourable Member for the City, Dame Billie Miller. I am delighted to offer those congratulations on behalf of the constituency of St. Joseph. I want to point out at the outset that I am aware that the Honourable Member for the City is very passionate about Parliament and I have often heard her comment with great fervour that she longs for the day when we will once again see Parliament restored to its former glory, not in terms of its physical environs but in terms of the interest that the average Barbadian would show in what we do in these hallowed halls.

I am therefore delighted to welcome the Fifth Form students of the Grantley Adams Memorial School who are here today to observe the proceedings. Sir, I believe that the presence of these students would give the Honourable Member for the City great delight and comfort in knowing that today we would be sowing the seeds of a renewed interest among our young citizens in what happens to Grantley Adams Memorial School. I would also want to laud the administration of that school for being so forward-thinking.

I am unable to say that I have a relationship or friendship with the Honourable Member which goes back many years. In fact, speaking at this time after many of her longstanding colleagues and friends have spoken, there is not much left for me to say. However, I want to mention that I had two encounters with the Honourable Member for the City going back some years and they both left an indelible mark on my outlook on several matters.

Sir, when the National Housing Corporation was looking to build what is now called the London Bourne Towers in the heart of the City, I had the honour of being the Chairman of the National Housing Corporation at that time. I approached that project with some great trepidation. It was seen as prime commercial real estate in the heart of Bridgetown and I had many phone calls from people who were interested in buying and investing in this property. They all said that this land was too valuable to put into public housing.

H21: 12.10 p.m.

Sequence 13

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Continuation of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL:

I must say that when you look at the dollars and cents of it, perhaps some of these individuals, even though they spoke from a bias perspective, might well have been correct. When I encountered for the first time, the Honourable Member for the City and she made it known that as far as she was concerned, that land could be put to its best use in public housing, I must say that I was forced to sit up and listen.

I remember her clearly saying, that except you had a city with people living in it, the City would die. I reflected on it and I reflected on it some more and, I must admit that I came around to the Honourable Member for the City's way of thinking. In fact, I am satisfied that our experience at having restored good housing to the centre of Bridgetown, has been responsible, in large measure, for a new spurt of activity in terms of residence.

One only needs to think of major cities in the world, such as London, Miami and Manhattan, and you recognise that they are prized places for people to reside. It is with the tenacity that the Honourable Member for the City showed that I took great courage in the fact that we were making a decision which was the right decision, which was not governed by balled commercial considerations, and which would serve to benefit the City of Bridgetown.

Sir, not long after I had the honour again to Chair the Urban Development Commission and I had another, equally memorable, encounter with the Honourable Member for the City when she virtually dragged us into Cat's Castle. I must tell you that, if you do not take our difference in age into account, you would have to wonder why the Honourable Member for the City was walking so fast up front and I was lagging a little in the back.

The Honourable Member showed such an intimate knowledge of her constituency, she showed us places where people were still residing, regrettably, and had dirt floors, and she spoke about these social

injustices. There were great empathy and sadness that exuded from her. She continues to demonstrate that passion today.

I must tell you that I am deeply impressed by the wide range of knowledge the Honourable Member for the City has. She is well versed in sociology. Obviously, she is well versed in law, but she is well versed in matters of education and health.

Just yesterday evening at 10 minutes to six, as I left a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she mentioned that she wanted to have a brief word with me and we had an in-depth meeting on matters relating to my portfolio and the nexus between foreign affairs and international business.

I therefore want to commend the Honourable Member for the City for her outstanding service to the people of this nation. I want to commend her for her unswerving support for the life and the regeneration of the City of Bridgetown and urban Barbados.

Again, on behalf of the constituents from St. Joseph, I want to offer our heartiest congratulations.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to congratulate the Honourable Member for the City on her much reserved elevation. In this regard, I speak as a former constituent of hers, having grown up and lived my formative and teenage years, in the City of Bridgetown, as the Honourable Member refers to it. She never talks of Bridgetown. She never speaks of the City. She speaks always of the City of Bridgetown, an expression which for her, carries the weight and import, not only of a capital city, but of the place that she loves and the place where she is loved, and so, the expression, Billie for Bridgetown and Bridgetown for Billie was formulated in an election campaign, based on a mutual love of one another, a feeling that Billie was there for the City and the City was going solidly behind Billie, which it has done in consecutive elections, save only for, I think, the Election of 1986, over a 28-year period, which other Honourable Members have indicated, is a formidable achievement.

While those outside of Parliament tend to pour contempt on politicians, those of us who serve our constituencies know how difficult it is to serve people with myriad demands, and everybody wanting everything done immediately. I cannot imagine what it is to commit yourself to that singularly for 28 years.

The Honourable Member for the City came to the City as a candidate at a time when my political awareness was being heightened, and so, I was fascinated to see what was then, a very petite young woman with very sharp and colourful tongue indicating that she had an interest in contesting, politically. For the benefit of those in the gallery and the memory of those in this Honourable Chamber, the 1976 period was a very heady election campaign period, particularly for the Barbados Labour Party supporters.

The late Right Excellent Errol Barrow was seaming at the height of his political powers. In 1976, a political theme, then called, "the Great Combination" was seeking to wrest the Government from the experienced political side of the Democratic Labour Party, and here was a woman in her early 30s having the audacity to indicate that she wanted to run, in what was really very ground politically, because you can almost never tell which way the City is going to go in an election. It is one of those

constituencies that is a weather cock. Equally, it is a constituency that has always been won, except I believe in 1999, by very close margins. Therefore, a fight in the City is a political jewel for the jugular, and it is one of those places where every vote counts.

Sir, for me, a teenager of 14 years old at the time, I watched this young woman with tremendous interest, not believing that she was serious, when she came to my father's house. You are aware that we had a business, and still have a business on Baxters Road and at the time, we lived upstairs the business. We were also known to be long standing Barbados Labour Party supporters, and so, Ms. Miller, the Honourable Member for the City came for two reasons.

First there were long ties between her family and mine. The building was, in fact, a building that she had grown up in. The building in which I grew up in the City, is the same building that the Honourable Member for City grew up in, and there she came, knowing the connection between the families and knowing that my father, because of the nature of his business, saw hundreds of people come through our shop every week and, therefore, wanted to know whether or not she could depend on our support. It was a support which was given willingly and continues to be given willingly, not only to the Member for the City but to the Barbados Labour Party in general.

Therefore, the campaigns of 1976 unfolded. The by election first in St. Philip, then, I think, there was one in the City in May and the Barbados Labour Party against all the odds, won the by election in the City, but that Campaign, as indeed by elections do, attracted great national interest because of how the political parties of the day were, in fact, poised. There was also heightened Barbados Labour Party interest because the Barbados Labour Party candidate was a young woman, who was then already not a stranger to public attention to controversy, having distinguished herself, not only in her practice of law but a commentator on public issues of national importance at the time. Many of us remember a highly...

House 22, sequence 14, 12:2014

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Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Many of us remember the highly controversial television programme on a matter of social policy between her and the then Lord Bishop, the divide which it caused, the very strong language that was used and the re-broadcasting of it because people were so fascinated by it. That by-election in the City which was then the run-up to the national campaign was one of great interest. Mr. Speaker, Billie Miller was a platform speaker of amazing ability. At that time the Barbados Labour Party platform had excellent public speakers in persons like Henry Forde, now Sir Henry, Lionel Seymour Craig, 'Tom' Adams and Sir Harold St. John. People came to the City campaigns for entertainment. I would walk with other teenagers, and sometimes older persons to the political meetings in the City because members of the Party would come over to our house for refreshment.

When the Honourable Member for the City took possession of the platform, she spoke with confidence and she used her tongue to cut and to destroy the arguments of the Opposition and to reduce her political opponent to a position of loss, so from then she attracted great attention and admiration.

Mr. Speaker, whichever political side you are on, whether you like Billie Miller or not, you have to admire what she has been able to accomplish at the individual level and for Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, my own interest in politics was stimulated by that very exciting '76 period when I was a teenager only 14 years old and watching all of this unfold. Dame Billie was elected in 1976 for the first time in the City of Bridgetown as its lawful representative.

Mr. Speaker, she is no stranger to controversy. She had to fight over the establishment of the Drug Service. She had to deal with the issue of Saturday school when she was Minister of Education - an issue some say was not entirely of her own making. She had to deal, almost as a new Minister, with the initial and hot political topic of the relocation of the residents from Emmerton Lane and having Gabby write that epic song "Emmerton" and it being played on the radio every day amiss the resiting of a whole district and a sewerage system going up to protestation.

Sir, many people in telling the story do not now remember to say that when people were moved from Emmerton Lane to Clapham that their circumstances were considerably improved and the people were happy for the change. Dame Billie Miller knew what controversy was. She also knew what it was to work in a difficult ministry, such as the Ministry of Health, which is always a difficult portfolio to have and to have it combined then with environment.

In the political campaign we saw a feature of her personality that we were to see repeatedly. People spoke of her not as Billie but as "the billie". When Billie was on the platform speaking and using colourful language and speaking well, people would say "the billie" butting. Later on when she had to dig in on matters of policy and fight for her particular vision people would say, "Well, what do you expect from 'a billie'? This was so because of the whole notion that goats are stubborn, so people would use it this time in a very denigrating way even though they had used it in a complimentary way during the campaign, but that is the nature of politics.

Mr. Speaker, this woman in whose honour we speak today has known the political mountaintop and has equally experienced the valleys in politics. There were times of loneliness, times when her Party was at the height of its power and times when the Party was in the doldrums.

We know the story of the 1986 period when three or four people dragged into the Barbados Labour Party headquarters, Sir Henry, I think Dr. Cheltenham, the former Honourable Member for St. Joseph was there and the Honourable Member for the City, speaking about rebuilding the Barbados Labour Party, such is her love for the Barbados Labour Party.

She served the Barbados Labour Party unwaveringly, unfailingly and unapologetically. She speaks all the time of "my Party" and there is no doubt in anybody's mind what she means. Even then as she went into BLP headquarters, the boos and the jeers arising out of the 1986 defeat fortified her only for the fight that was ahead in the rebuilding of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, persons who come into politics must learn the lesson that there are not always good times in politics, that there are difficult and hard times and they have to be prepared to work with them and through them to achieve what their objectives may be and remember that the crowd who cheers you

one day will equally be happy to jeer you the following week.

The Honourable Member for the City has taken it all with an equanimity that speaks to the fact that she understands what political service is about and knows that when you are committed to service that even in the worst of times you cannot resile from the commitment that you have given to your party or to the people who have reposed their confidence in you.

Mr. Speaker, much has been spoken about her international reputation. When you go outside of Barbados, people might speak of Obadele, Sir Gary, Desmond Haynes or other sportsmen, but when we are talking about international policy formulation, the non-governmental organisation community, population planning and control and foreign policy the name of Billie Miller is always called.

People would ask you to give her their regards and ask how she is doing and speak of her with great and tremendous respect in a way that she has not been spoken of in Barbados. There is a saying, Mr. Speaker, that prophets are without honour in their own country, but I am glad we are giving the lie to that today and are speaking of her with honour.

Mr. Speaker, even though her present portfolio takes her out of the City she continues to be one of the most active Parliamentarians in representing the interest of her constituents by writing copious letters about areas she wants improve and upgradings she wants done.

Mr. Speaker, the whole redevelopment of the City, and I speak as someone who lived in the City, came about partly as a result of her vision and determination to have it done, whether it is improved housing, improved road systems, the upgrading of peoples' properties to allow them access to water, the improvement of schools and the conditions in schools or whether it is new and high quality housing.

Even now she speaks in terms of the development of Cat's Castle and Church Village and what needs to go on there to have new urban development and resuscitation for persons of those two districts. Therefore, the Ministry of Housing is now working with the Urban Development Commission to bring to Cat's Castle and Church Village new and improved conditions as a result of her vision and her dogged determination to improve the City of Bridgetown as she calls it. She tells you plainly that nothing is too good for the people of the City and that they deserve only the best. She will fight you to get what she wants accomplished whether it is for vendors, businessmen or homeowners, and that is to be admired.

In paying tribute to her, we must commend her for the role she along with others in the Barbados Labour Party played in expecting a peaceful non-controversial transfer of leadership from one generation in the Barbados Labour Party in 1993 to another generation.

House 22 Sequence 15

12:30 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

We have seen much controversy attending the change of leadership in political parties in Barbados, but it was partly because of the Honourable Member for the City's own attitude and others, who all had a stake and claim on leadership at the time, that the leadership issue in the Barbados Labour Party was quickly and amicably resolved, which put the Party's footing to gear us into winning an election and to lead the country, without the internal bickering and quarrelling which would have undermined a party's ability to govern and to give leadership to a country.

Mr. Speaker, there are many personal things about the Honourable Member for the City that I would want to mention. As I have before indicated, our two families have known each other for some time and there are things about her that have not been mentioned. One of those things is that the Honourable Member for the City is an unstoppable shopper, which is typical of many women.

She would travel all over the world and would bargain with whoever when shopping. She has an eye for fine things, whether it is jewelry, clothes, home furnishing and fittings and enjoys shopping. She will try as hard as she can, as long as she has finished her work, to eke out no more than five minutes to trawl a mall or a shopping district, to find something to her particular liking.

I have had the very distinct privilege of being entertained at her home and eating food that was cooked by her own hand. She is an excellent cook and she prepares a fine table. She is a very gracious hostess, so that as one goes to her home, apart from the fighting political side of her, one would see a softer side of Billie Miller, a side which would make a person feel relaxed and at home.

Mr. Speaker, for some reason her life and mine seem to have had a number of parallels over the years. I want to thank her, as I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has done, for playing a very special role in my own political career and development.

Mr. Speaker, when Henry Forde, as he was then, was Honourable Member for Christ Church West and Leader of the Barbados Labour Party started the rebuilding of the Party in the 1986 to 1994 period, I was one of those persons whom he had identified as wanting to be part of a future Barbados Labour Party's team.

When he approached me, I went to speak about it to the Honourable Member for the City, who gave me tremendous guidelines about how difficult it is to serve politically, and how much more difficult it is for women to serve. She was full and frank with me and shared some of her experiences with me. She told me to go home and search my heart about what it was that I really wanted to do because this would have taken so much out of me at the personal level, unless I felt totally committed to what I was going to do.

Her advice was sound. When we won the election in 1994, she took the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and I under her wing and guided us in relation to matters of protocol, our conduct as Ministers, the perceptions and expectations of the public and our relationship with the Press. It really was a wonderful mothering that she gave to us as young women coming into politics. The lessons she gave us then, have served us in wonderful stead and continue to serve us today.

In fact, she is one of those persons to whom one could turn to for advice and guidance on any political matter, and know that one would be given sound advice. Sir, though she might be angry with someone at the time, that person could have still relied on her advice and judgement to be unerring and correct.

Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that her path and mine have crossed. We have both grown up in the City in the same house. Our families were both Barbados Labour Party families. Our fathers were both small, black entrepreneurs, struggling to keep businesses afloat, and trying to pass a vision of business development onto the next generation. It is to Freddie Miller's tribute and honour that his business continues and I hope by the Grace of God that equally I would be able to see Sermac Laundry become a cross-generational business.

Sir, in addition, at different times we went to the same primary school, which is really fascinating when one considers that the school had only 18 students. We both went to Queen's College at various points in our lives. We both chose to read for and to practise law. We both practised our practice of Law in the same Chambers. We both entered politics and came to the Ministry of Health as our first portfolio. We both came at age 32.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member is asking if we will leave at the same time. We will both leave at 28 years.

Aside.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we both have also held the Ministry of the Environment portfolio. Sir, it is interesting and I say this because in a small society, it is still fascinating that two individuals could have this many parallels, and this is without any effort on the part of either one of us. It has just turned out that way.

Sir, I must say that these have not been bad footsteps in which to follow. We both served the Barbados Labour Party and are committed to the perpetuation of its philosophy, the articulation of its vision, and the implementation of its policy.

Sir, I believe that the footsteps of Billie Miller are good footsteps for any young politician to follow, whether he or she is from the Barbados Labour Party or from the Democratic Labour Party. There are lessons in her service from which we could all draw and benefit.

Sir, I think it is not only important to thank her as a person who has lived in, and who has politically represented the City, but one who has contributed to education and health. It is also important to thank her for her service as Minister of Foreign Affairs, as she seeks to guide Barbados' foreign policy at one of the most difficult and critical times in our political, social and economic history.

Mr. Speaker, when the history of Barbados is written, not only would have Billie Miller created many personal firsts and would have been a person of tremendous distinction, but her political, social and economic contributions to Barbados would have been one of the most sound and unparalleled

contributions that the country would have ever seen. H:No. 21 (16)1240 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON:

One of the parallels is that we both came to Parliament to serve the Barbados Labour Party with her having a father who had been a parliamentarian at the same time that my aunt was a sitting member. Sir, it is service above self, the country first and commitment to your vision and philosophy that has helped to guide Barbados to the stage it is at.

I pay tribute to the contribution of the Honourable Member for the City and acknowledge willingly that it is an honour which is truly well deserved.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 145 p.m.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to second that.

The question that the House be suspended until 1:45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. Speaker suspended the House accordingly.

H22/12:41Sequence 17

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is reconvened. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure and it is indeed an honour to lend my voice in a congratulatory vote to the Honourable Member for The City and to congratulate her on her achievement and appointment. I want to say that when I look back at the history of the Honourable Member, from her sojourn from as early as 1976 and her stewardship of 28 years in the Honourable House of Assembly, it is indeed an honour that is befitting an individual who has demonstrated, not only a commitment to her chosen area of endeavour, politics, but in the service of this country and by extension the service of the people of the City of Bridgetown.

Sir, any individual who would have demonstrated such a long period of service with an outstanding record, one that goes beyond our national borders to the extent of being Representative of the United Nations, functioning as the first female to become the International Chairperson of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, they are, indeed, accomplishments that all Barbadians should be very proud

of.

I want to stand and give my fullest regard and congratulations to the Honourable Member for the City. I also want to say that from my earliest days, even before I became politically conscious, I heard about the Honourable Member for the City and I always conjured up the images of this fiery and aggressive politician, one that brings a "stick-to-it-iveness" to politics and a battle-tested Parliamentarian.

However, over the past few months I have had the opportunity to interact more closely with her and recognise that the Honourable Member is somewhat of a Jekyll & Hyde personality, in that outside of politics she is meek and maternalistic but on the battlefield, she is quite a joust in general. I have to give Jack his jacket. In the past few months I have learnt a lot from the Honourable Member.

Asides.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Sir, with younger persons entering politics she never hesitates to guide you as she attempts to set certain standards and standards that are high and standards that all Parliamentarians should aspire to achieve. I think that aspect of going beyond the political divide is, indeed, quite important because there are those types of value systems that allow one to maintain the decorum that we would expect of each other.

I want to say to her that whatever areas of endeavour she may opt to get involved in, if and whenever she chooses to step out of politics, as long as she brings that same level of commitment and dedication and that same level of capacity to separate the politics from the personal, I would assure the Honourable Member that she will meet with great success.

H21: 15.50 p.m.

Sequence 18

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Dr. D.C. ESTWICK:

Sir, like many of my colleagues on This Side, who have spoken in favour of the Honourable Member for the City, I would just want to say to her that I do stand and offer my greatest respect and regard for her political achievements and her achievements outside of this country.

I know that she always held this country's flame alight at all times, when she is performing in that international arena. I do not believe it is an arena that is partisan in any way, and that requires a level of maturity, politically, which I am sure would have come from her years of service in Parliament.

I really would want to offer you my sincerest congratulations and all the future best, as you proceed in any other endeavour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I also want to join in this debate, on behalf of myself, family and the constituents of St. Michael West Central, to pay our greatest respect and appreciation to the Honourable Member for the City for the great contribution she has made to politics and to Barbados, over the last 28 years.

Sir, people are rewarded for their achievements and they are also remembered for the level of contribution they make. I am quite sure that when the Honourable Member for the City leaves politics, 28 years is a long time, that she would be remembered like as people such as Mother Theresa, Nelson Mandela, Errol Barrow and Grantley Adams.

Mr. Speaker, I came into politics in the early 1990s and I would say, up front, that it is through the Honourable Member for the City that I am where I am now.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: I am not speaking about the backbench, Sir, I am speaking about being in politics. I said that because I could hear that same kind of statement coming from the Honourable Member for the City's mouth. If she had to talk about that, she would say the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, she and I would have our differences, but then again, the Honourable Member for the City and everyone would have differences at some time. She is that kind of person because whatever she says, you can say at the end of the day, it is being constructively done and, "no malice whatsoever," as the Honourable Member for St. Philip South said.

I never knew her as a young lady in politics. I can tell you that my Dad once said to me that he never knew the Honourable Member for the City, but he knew her mother very well. He is 80 years old now, but remembers being in the Hospital as a little boy and Nurse Lashley seeing after him, and giving him a little more than she gave the other children on the ward.

Sir, I am saying that I also learnt from the Honourable Member for the City that her mother died when she was a young woman, and she had the responsibility of raising her siblings. Although, she was never a biological mother, she has been a mother to her siblings. I know she has been a mother to one of her nephews, whom she sent to school and so on. Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of person the Honourable Member for the City is.

Sir, at the constituency level, we worked together. When I was the Minister of Public Works and Transport, we worked together on the Bridgetown Bypass Road, the fish vendors in Baxters Road, problems at Murphy Pasture, problems at Kensington New Road, problems in the City, and the famous Boardwalk. She was there at all times, encouraging us to complete these projects in the City. She would say things like, "I do not know how long I would be around and we have to make sure that things are done in the City. The City has been neglected for too long," and she is that kind of representative.

She has done her bit that she can have any amount of accolades placed on her, and the high honour that has been bestowed on her is well deserving. At the international level, she has done Barbados proud. People might not know about the contribution she makes about what comes to Barbados at the

diplomatic level, as well the levels of imports and exports. Her Ministry is not a ministry that you would see what is done, like the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Housing or the Ministry of Health.

I want to say to you, Sir, that we, the people of St. Michael West Central are happy that we can say these things on her behalf, and I want to just say in closing that her contribution will not go unnoticed. We, in the Barbados Labour Party are proud to be associated with her, and we do pray that whenever the time comes for her to leave politics that we all would say to her, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, it gives me the greatest pleasure to compliment, congratulate and to thank the Hon. Miss Billie Miller, the Honourable Member for the City. Let me first congratulate her on being elevated to the Dame of St. Andrew. The professional way in which she carries out her duties has caused her to be respected, as most Honourable Members have already said, nationally, regionally and internationally.

Sir, many Honourable Members before me spoke about the many firsts that this Honourable Member has achieved in her long and distinguished career. I believe we are very much apt to cite the accomplishment of many of the females in this society and all over the world, but we seem to forget the outstanding contributions that our own Honourable Member for the City has made to the development of Barbados, indeed to all of our citizens.

I think we take for granted, the sacrifice necessary to be successful in the political arena. It must have taken a woman of extraordinary worth, confidence and tenacity to have entered the political arena in the mid 70s in what was considered at that time to be more of a man's world. I believe, Sir, to be able to assault the heights to become Deputy Prime Minister of the country that is considered to be the number one developing country in the world, certainly speaks volumes about this Honourable Member and all she has achieved and all she has done.

I believe, Sir, that the forthrightness really betrays the true nature of the person that is Dame Billie Miller, one who is caring and loving. I have had the opportunity to be in social gatherings, even to be in attendance at her home and realised that the Billie Miller we know of in politics, in the House and in Cabinet, is certainly not the Billie Miller in a much more relaxed social setting.

She is loving and one who, in my experience bears no malice, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central said. She is one who can admonish you in one breath and in another breath, praise you and thank you.

House 22, sequence 19, 14:1114

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Continuation of Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Certainly, Sir, after years of observing Billie Miller, following her political career and seeing her go about her business, I actually attended political meetings and listened like everyone else to hear the fiery Billie Miller speak.

Sir, I finally met her in 1994 when I was a first-timer in the General Elections. At that time she was the person who was chosen in the Barbados Labour Party to shepherd the young St. Michael candidates of that day. As a candidate, her pearl of wisdom and insight into the process of politics and elections was enlightening and an education for all of us.

She had three rules for politics. One of those rules was never to exult in victory because in politics there is always a loser and a winner and that at some time or the other you are going to be a loser. Had I but listened to everything she had to say I believe I would have been better off now.

I happen to follow her as Minister of Tourism and International Transport and wherever I went people in the tourism arena spoke of her with the utmost reverence and respect. Everyone tells a story about a Billie Miller who is considered to be the most polite and the nicest person they have met with, everything that the word “nice” says.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Now charged with the responsibility of being the principal steward of the Ministry or the agency that has the responsibility for charting our future, which may be the age of the most profound change we would see, speaks volumes of the quality of the lady that is Dame Billie Miller. Her passion for the development of the City of Bridgetown is unmatched by any other Barbadian. As this urban redevelopment project takes place, she is obviously living out many of her dreams for the City.

Mr. Speaker, I was much moved by how she reacted on the issue of the London Bourne Towers when that area was supposed to be utilized for some other project. She spoke about the fact that poor people also needed to live in the best of surroundings and to the fact that being a poor person you can raise your standards by being able to live in good surroundings. She did not want balconies because she wanted that particular edifice to be held in high esteem by Barbadians and visitors alike.

I remember someone saying at the time that we did not need to put public housing on a space like that and that the Government could have earned a lot more from it by putting it into different types of real estate such as high-price condos, but she insisted that the people of the City needed to live in those types of good surroundings overlooking the ocean.

Mr. Speaker, her interest and insistence in celebrating the 375th Anniversary of Bridgetown is also well documented. I mentioned earlier that I inherited from her, under the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated, the entire urban rehabilitation project to upgrade, refurbish and to bring Bridgetown to the state of being the number one capital city in this region and possibly in this hemisphere.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we could all learn a lot from Dame Billie Miller through her overall demeanor; her articulation when she speaks the English language; her respect for other parliamentarians on both sides of this House; her respect to Parliament, to Cabinet and the Government; her commitment

to party; her commitment to family and her love and respect for people and for country which was never compromised.

I wish again to congratulate her and to thank her for all that she has done for me personally in helping to shape my political career. I am privileged to serve with her in both this Parliament and in the Cabinet and I wish her only the best as she continues to serve her people. May she serve for another 28 plus years.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I would just make a very short contribution as I reflect on my knowledge of Dame Billie Miller, a remarkable and outstanding individual in the body politics of Barbados.

My knowledge of her and my legitimacy to speak is from my observation of her while being a member of the Opposition in the Senate. At the time I was a member of the Democratic Labour Party and subsequently a member of Parliament in the Government to which she also is a member, so I want to compliment her for her great achievements over the years.

Sir, it is not about the Honourable Member, if I should so call myself, from St. Michael East's perception of her, neither is it about the verbal or intangible things we have showered on her within the halls of Parliament. It is not, in my view, about how she feels about herself and her importance. It comes down to the acid test of the peoples' perception of her. I would like my contribution to be a reflection based on what the people think about her.

Mr. Speaker, we can write the history of Parliament to impress upon the world that Parliamentarians have done the greatest things on earth and have made meaningful contributions, but it would not stand the test of time as a living legacy if that record does not reflect the truth. That truth lives on in the lives, whether it is considered as folk, in the records of the oral historians of the time who reflect the truth.

The melodies and the cleverness of intellectualism that paints a glowing and fine picture of individuals do not survive time. At the end of the day, the test resides with the people who would be able to measure your contribution. The people constitute the test tube of the reality. That reality would be how the people of Cat's Castle, Farnum's Land, Marshall Gap, New Orleans, Pondside, Nelson Street and Greenfield see her. It is those persons who would say to us and to persons unborn if she was great or not in her contribution to their development.

Mr. Speaker, I had a sojourn working and interacting in the City of Bridgetown through social relationships in Marshall Gap and New Orleans and even when I had my reservations about her greatness, I always heard ordinary people in the street talking about her fine qualities. They would speak about her fearlessness, the great courage which she had demonstrated and the passion which she puts into the representation of the people of the City. One thing I can say about her character is that what you see is what you get.

House 22 Sequence 202:10 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Speaker, in politics there are great agents of deception; people talk in very carolling terms, espouse all types of philosophical principles and highlight many different programmes but when the action of the individual is judged against his or her words, there is a great zero of that person's contribution to the development of mankind. In some cases, those persons could be perceived as parasites on the body politics, ripping off the Treasury, and not contributing to the people's lives. This cannot be said of Dame Billie.

Mr. Speaker, I know that if the Honourable Member for the City says anything to me of which I do not approve, I know that it was said with a clear heart and for that, I will always respect her. There are many times when we have had differences of opinion but at the end of the day, I walk away knowing that is how she felt, not that there was anything contemptuous but that she believes what she is saying to be right.

I think that any person, regardless of how conventional or unorthodox the approach is likely to be, what is most important is that the element of honesty and truth surface. I think that she must be remembered for that unequivocal feature of her character as being straightforward and up-front. I would like to join with all others who have said great things about her.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that in our local parochial politics and history of Barbados, we learn to respect the contributions of our people, especially those persons who came to Parliament in the post-colonial period since black self-Government.

The Honourable Member has a long line of political successions. She symbolises the preservation of a traditional family life in the body politics of Barbados. According to informed sources, her uncle and father have contributed to the body politics in Barbados and in most cases, to the City of Bridgetown.

Mr. Speaker, I think she understands her importance in perpetuating the family's legacy and what that legacy means, not only to her but to Barbados. She must be likened to the outstanding international icons such as Sonia Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Winnie Mandela and Dame Nita Barrow.

Sir, Harriette Tubman, for example, is recorded in history for her great contribution in assisting both male and female slaves through the underground railway into Canada, in order that they could have enjoyed the benefits of freedom.

Sir, Billie Miller has equally contributed to this civilisation on the same status as those international individuals. She has not only contributed to the physical development of the reurbanisation of Bridgetown, which is being mirrored in that concrete erection at Pondsider, but to housing in general in the City. There has also been a complete renewal of the Wickham/Lewis Boardwalk.

Mr. Speaker, she has also contributed to the general development of young people within the City of Bridgetown. Sir, long before Resource Centres were being set up by the State, the Honourable Member for the City had classes for persons to learn computer technology, the performing arts and in many

different skills and forms of education.

Apart from that, in the general policies and programmes of the Ministry of Education, she has etched her name in the pages of history in the development of education in Barbados, and has obviously had some impact on the thinking of other Ministers of Education throughout the Eastern Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, this lady has made a remarkable contribution and I want to join with others in complimenting her. Sir, most importantly, it was at a time when females in the society were lingering on the periphery on the body politics of Barbados, simply because of male domination in Parliament that the Honourable Member for the City was a trailblazer and a symbol of hope for young women who dream of becoming part of the mainstream of central politics. I believe she was that source of inspiration that has driven many other female Parliamentarians to become part and parcel of the mainstream of body politics in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, having over 25 years of service in a male-dominated caucus would not be a very easy job. Therefore, it is important that we have people at the pinnacle of our society who represent something that is meaningful. We would never be able to measure the kind of inspiration the presence of the Honourable Member for the City has contributed to many young people, in both the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party, in shaping them and offering them to come forward to offer their services to this society in contributing to its general development.

Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Honourable Member for the City for that marvellous contribution at the parochial level. As has been said before, the Honourable Member for the City's impact on politics at the local level has moved to the international level, that being Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Sir, wherever one goes in the region, whether it is at representing Barbados at the level of the State or representing Barbados in a non-governmental organisation movement, whatever type of caucus it is, there would always be someone to ask: "How is Billie Miller?"

Mr. Speaker, I felt it imperative for me to make a contribution on this occasion but I felt that truth itself must be clearly mirrored. I do not think the Honourable Member for the City is the same kind of political foxhole character that I am but I have had the privilege of working alongside her in the last Election campaign and she was at the centre of the team in the urban community. She was very clear on what approach we had to use, in order to force the opposing team to retreat.

She was very clear in determining what strategy was important to the candidate of St. Michael East, St. Michael South East, and the City of Bridgetown, and those candidates who ought to have been in that team, planning for the success of the Barbados Labour Party in the urban community who had become victims of the occasion.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I have followed the Honourable Member for the City's advice and that is why I am here today to pay my compliments to her in her great achievements.

H:No. 21 (21)220 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Sir, in closing, I want to wish her a long life when it comes to retirement. I want her to relax and enjoy the pleasures of retirement in good health. May Dame Billie Miller live a long and prosperous life.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to join in complimenting the decision-makers who bestowed the award on Dame Billie Miller. Regrettably, I was not here to call her and congratulate her when this Parliament, through the CPA, honoured Dame Billie for her contribution.

Sir, there are probably four politicians left over from the 80s and I am one of them. Dame Billie and I always had a good relationship. It was highly charged politically in here and outside. I have canvassed bitterly against her in the City in every election since 1981.

We fought bitterly on the Floor of this House when the Government was elected in 1994 and then worked well together in achieving a lot of things that Parliamentarians now take for granted but beyond that, we have always had a healthy respect for each other.

In 1975 when I first became interested in politics, Dame Billie was viewed as the forerunner in turning around the fortunes of the Barbados Labour Party.

Dame Billie has always been viewed as a person who men fear perhaps because she was such a trail-blazer in politics. I remember working for Keith Simmons in Fitts' Village and asked him to let me canvass another area. He refused and said he wanted me to canvas a particular box because nobody on the canvass team wanted to visit the house of Billie Miller as she might unleash some invectives or throw them out of her house.

When I arrived, she was in house garb looking homely and different. She said she was cooking breadfruit soup, as it was Saturday, and if I wanted some of it I could stay. I declined because I felt it might have compromised the task that I was sent to undertake which was merely to make sure her name was on the list. She showed me around the house. We sat and chatted and I reported back to the team that they had missed a great opportunity to be treated royally by Billie Miller.

When the programme finished, she offered some of us a lift to Bridgetown. I reminded her that I lived in Fitts' Village, rudely went on to tell her that she usually passed me every morning at the bus stop and she told me that her car was not a taxi.

Sir, what the Honourable Member for St. Michael East said about forthrightness is quite true and it is something that I admire. We battled in here in 1994 and, at that time, as a young leader, there were older Parliamentarians and I wondered why they never intervened when we battled over points of procedures. One day at a parliamentary group meeting, I was complaining about the fact that none

of my colleagues would intervene when Billie Miller paraded on me week after week in the House of Assembly and I was required to fight her as well as the Presiding Officer on issues that would come up on my behaviour. They responded that it was an example of unrequited love on both parts and that they would not intervene to stop the weekly battles.

The conditions of service including allowances and benefits that constituents received by the provision of office equipment, all these things were achieved during that period when a major revision was undertaken on the work that Parliamentarians had to do and I credit Dame Billie with a lot of the focus we have had on that.

I also credit her with improving Barbados' profile in the CPA not only as President but leading up to the presidency, Barbados' profile had improved. We have to remember that Barbados would have been instrumental at the resumption of the Conference of the CPA for the Caribbean North Atlantic region.

H22/14:30Sequence 22

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

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

Dame Billie Miller, some others and I went to Bermuda to participate in the Conference that resumed the regional Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which has become one of the leading organisations in the region. She was in the Opposition and I was a back-bencher. Since then I believe that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was able to grow from strength to strength in the Caribbean.

People met their commitments and eventually we were able to sponsor somebody, who became President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and did Barbados and the region proud in that regard. I think that the Commonwealth as a whole has benefitted significantly from that experience because of the importance of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I think those things are very important. Her success at the polls is also something that should be remarked upon because whether it has been a massive victory, a small victory or a loss, I think that Dame Billie Miller has always maintained her composure, has focussed on the task at hand and remained committed to the people she represents.

In 1991, the Barbados Labour Party Campaign Manager said that I said something about her on a political platform and she stopped speaking to me, instead of waiting to find out the truth of what I said.

Asides

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: In 1991, she was fighting for her political life. It was a tough election and when she reentered this Parliament, I went to speak to her because I was so happy to see her back in this Parliament, although I felt sadness for the person who lost at that time. Sir, when she returned, she then turned up the pot. Fearless once again, she moved the Resolution that toppled the Government

and was on a plane the next day with me to Washington. Somebody had assigned her to the seat next to mine.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Once again the two of us had to converse on a very difficult subject between Barbados and Washington because we had just suffered a major defeat in Parliament. I was not sure what was happening. The Resolution that ended up being successful, I am certain that she did not anticipate that it would have been successful, so no doubt she would have been going through her own emotion about what had happened the day before, what it meant for Barbados and what it meant for parliamentary democracy.

It was one of those strange moments in politics that you share with the most unlikely of persons because, as we conversed about it, we both recognised that we could not answer the many questions that would arise as a result of that Resolution being passed.

Sir, events in the Westminster system tend to take care of those situations. Trinidad had a whole year with a non-government. In fact, Trinidadians said that the country was better run in those days, either before or after. The Westminster system has a way of resolving those kinds of things, filling political vacuums, and, perhaps, we learned a lot from that.

I believe that the Honourable Member for the City, as Minister of Education, Minister of Health and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Billie Miller has accredited herself well. She is a fine public speaker, whether she is speaking in the international fora or in this Parliament with a wide vocabulary, outstanding diction and presentation, somebody who Barbadian women and men, in terms of her ability as a public speaker, would do well to emulate.

Sir, when she descends to the level to which we all descend to sometimes, she is not as good but whenever she is soaring high, she is an outstanding debater. There are no two ways about it. There is not a word that is lost. There is not a phrase that is not sensible and well constructed and I think that in that sense she is to be emulated as a public speaker.

Sir, the Honourable Member can be moody, very tough as a politician and direct but her most enduring quality and the one that I admire, I do not admire it to criticise others, I admire it because it is a quality that I think is most attractive to me, is her loyalty, politically. I do not think that Billie Miller could function in the Democratic Labour Party just as I do not think that I could function in the Barbados Labour Party. There are other politicians like that who are not focussed in that regard, but there are also some people who take that Party's allegiance and loyalty more seriously and as a guiding light to their own political involvement. In that sense you can only see her as a Barbados Labour Party politician.

Mr. Speaker, that loyalty is something that I admire and I think it is an outstanding quality. She is also a courteous person to work with as long as you are not mashing her corns while on the microphone, but when you are dealing with her in a businesslike way, she is extremely courteous and fair.

Sir, having said all of that, I am going to reiterate that I sincerely congratulate Dame Billie Antoinette on the award that was presented to her, Independence Honour, and I hope that she will continue to make her contribution to the end of this term. I cannot promise you that there will be any safe passage into the next term but, least of all, I know that even if this were the end of your political career, you would have had enough under your belt to satisfy you that your original objective on entering politics has been met, not in the last 24 months but a long time ago.

In that sense, I am sure that you are a symbol to other women in Barbados in the politics of this country and I hope that nothing will be done to diminish that stature which you have earned for yourself and which, in that way, brought you this great honour on behalf of the people of Barbados. I congratulate you.

Congratulations.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of St. Philip North to congratulate the Honourable Member for the City for the honour that was bestowed upon her and her recent elevation.

Mr. Speaker, I recall a by-election in St. Philip North in 1976.

Asides.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: I recall the slogan “The Hardest Hard” and that the areas of Marley Vale and Church Village were the stomping ground for the Barbados Labour Party in St. Philip North.

Asides.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: I can recall my parents telling me about this very young speaker at these political meetings. They also told me about the team of speakers at the meetings. What impressed me most was the fact they were all Barristers-at-law.

Sir, I also recall my parents saying to Warwick Franklyn that the Democratic Labour Party got some good lashes from some young speakers and so the writing was on the wall. I became interested, thereafter, in politics and I then watched the Honourable Member’s contributions in the Budget debates and I can only classify her as an outstanding debater.

H21: 14.40 p.m.

Sequence 23

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Mr. M.A. LASHLEY:

I want to say that she has made an outstanding contribution, at the national, regional and international levels. I must say, by extension, that she is an extremely good role model for young politicians and

those persons who want to aspire, in terms of politics.

I want to say finally that I appreciate her guidance, whether it was direct or indirect, in terms of parliamentary rules and procedures. I found her to be very helpful in that area because from This Side we can watch her eyes, and she would indicate to us, by way of a nod, that we are on stream or off stream, in relation to the Rules of Parliament.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate her again, for her recent elevation and, certainly, that is also on behalf of the people of St. Philip North.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make this contribution with a certain amount of joy for two reasons. One on behalf of myself but first of all, Sir, I think I should speak on behalf of my family. It does not fall within the ken of most Honourable Members of this House to know that sometime in the 1940s, I believe, the Honourable Member for the City's mother and my grandmother, on my paternal side, would have been close friends.

They went to nursing school in England together. Sir, that friendship continued upon their return to Barbados and, as I understand, thereafter, my uncles, my aunts, my father and the Honourable Member for the City and her siblings would have been childhood and adolescent friends.

Sir, it is on their behalf that I would first of all, like to offer my congratulations but on a more personal note, I would also want to associate myself with all of the sentiments that have been said about, and on behalf of Dame Billie, during the course of this day's discussion.

Mr. Speaker, it cannot be understated that the award of the Dame of St. Andrew for extraordinary public service to Barbados, international organisations and to politics, cannot come about easily. I do not think, Sir, that there is any doubt in anyone's mind, that you cannot serve 28 years in this House of Assembly, without having demonstrated some capacity for public achievement. You cannot, Sir, have been at a senior executive level of an organisation as large as the International Planned Parenthood Federation, without demonstrating some capacity for public achievement and accomplishment. Therefore, there is no gainsaying the fact that the award is very much merited. I would want to associate myself with the sentiments of all Honourable Members who have spoken to Dame Billie's exemplary leadership style, qualities and personal characteristics here today.

Sir, if I could, I would not want to stray down that anecdotal path but rather to speak to this House, in the terms of an individual who has come to public life and has had the benefit of, and continues to enjoy some element of what can only be described as pupillage at the feet of the Honourable Member for the City.

Sir, if I were to speak from my own experience as a person who has enjoyed that type of pupillage and working in tandem with the Honourable Member for the City, I would want to say that one of the most outstanding and impactful things about the opportunity to enjoy that pupillage from the Honourable Member for the City has been, Mr. Speaker, that she is capable of imparting significant values and principles on the side of foreign affairs.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as recently as yesterday, I have had reason to ask the Honourable Member, but Senior Minister, why is it that we remain so firmly wed - and I would not call any particular country's name - with our conviction to help these people who would really seek sometimes to do us injury? She continues to speak, I make no bones about it, Sir, as though one were speaking to a pupil, and would say, "but you know, a small country has no significant resources and so on. If it has anything at all, it must have its integrity."

I think, Sir, that Dame Billie has exemplified and personified that commitment to bringing a level of integrity to her conduct of the public affairs of this country, and to the international relations of Barbados.

It is all too easy to point your finger in the direction of other States which, really and truly can be capable sometimes of almost treacherous, almost perfidious types of behaviour, but it has always been a pleasure, certainly since the last nine months, of being able to meet Ambassadors coming from Japan, Costa Rico, Brazil, people whom we do not do a lot of business with. They would say to you that what they relish and cherish most about the relationship they have enjoyed with Barbados is the fact, Sir, that this relationship has been grounded in a form of commitment to integrity and a commitment to ensuring that the country Barbados, stands out as a country that one can hold up as keeping its word, as living up to the very best of international practices. They often personalise that in reference to Dame Billie, and their experiences in interacting with her. It is therefore, a cause, I think for us to be very proud.

On the other side of the business of the Ministry, Sir, there is no question that the issue of foreign trade resonates deeply in this Caribbean. Again, if there is a lesson to be learnt, it is that the cause of small economies must be defended, stoutly. Very often, especially with the advent of institutions like the regional negotiating machinery and so on, people see it more as a brief.

Just like a lawyer would take his trial brief and does his case and afterwards that all is said and done, I think, Sir, in the Honourable Member for the City, it has become a cause. I repeat, Sir, the issue of defending the interest of small economies is more of a cause to her than anything else.

Again, I have had the happy experience of observing, for example, the way in which she would treat the issue of small island developing states. Again, as recently as yesterday, this came to mind, when persons might want to say, "well, you know in defending a small economy, you are really looking at the small islands of the Caribbean." She would arrest them, literally. "Halt, no, no stop, we are in this boat together."

In her imitable style, she pointed out that Guyana and Surinam and Belize are not islands but these have similar economic issues to contend with as we do, and that we either go forward together or we do not go forward at all. It is that kind of all embracing, all-encompassing commitment to the small economies issues that I think singles her out.

I would have to say that this has earned her the hard fought and hard won respect of US trade leaders, and the European trade leaders who recognise that they are dealing, in the process of interacting with her, with someone who is obviously one of the longest standing Foreign Ministers in the Commonwealth, but arguable one of the most outstanding and respected Foreign Ministers as well.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of categorisation does not come easy.

House 24, sequence 24, 14:5014

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

As I said, it has been a process for me of being able to enjoy the experience of sitting at the feet of one who can impart vital concepts, ideas and values how the business and the conduct of Barbados' public relation in the international arena should be pursued.

Sir, I relish that opportunity, therefore, I would want on behalf of myself and my family to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dame Billie in this her moment of honour. I wish her many more happy years in continuing to prosecute the best interest of the people of Barbados and the region as a whole.

I thank you.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join in congratulating Dame Billie on her recent award. Mr. Speaker, Dame Billie was one of the first people with whom I came into contact with in the mid to late 1980s when I developed a very serious interest in politics. From then there was a certain chemistry between us.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are those who said facetiously that if Dame Billie had been 10 years younger, or if I had been 10 years older perhaps her life would have been a lot better today. Mr. Speaker, what stands out about her in my mind is the amount of time she always had particularly for young people interested in politics. She was always willing, ready and able to give advice and assistance to young persons who were interested in entering the political arena.

Mr. Speaker, I make bold to say that at that time around the mid to late 1980s when I expressed a strong interest in politics and decided that I was going to go headlong into it, although at that time I perhaps may not have been the first candidate of choice for the area which I now represent, it was Dame Billie who decided that irrespective of other persons belief that she was quite willing and ready to walk with me, not quite hand- in-hand but, certainly, to walk with me through the area of St. Michael North.

I well remember one experience we had and I am sure that when I recall it, she would also recall it. While canvassing with me, obviously as a beginner, I was quite timid, Dame Billie decided that while she would provide a comfort zone for me, I had to go forward and make my presence felt which was a very good approach. I remember very clearly going to a house in White Hall and as usual Dame Billie told me to go forward and knock at the door. On approaching the verandah I saw a chain going around a corner towards the side of the house but I still decided to go ahead and knock at the door. I knocked at the door and then the chain started to make some noise indicating that a dog was coming. On seeing the dog's approach, I literally jumped up on the railing, as it were, of the balcony, held on to an overhanging piece of wood in the patio and was literally swinging and shouting for the occupant of

the house to come and get the dog from under me so that I could come down.

When the lady came and got the dog off me as it were, I remember going back to Dame Billie who said to me that if a photographer was up here just now I could not get one single vote in the constituency at all.

Mr. Speaker, that experience of me swinging on a patio and Dame Billie in the road telling me that I could not get a vote if there had been a single photographer in the area at the time always stand out with me. I was subsequently able, during the election campaign of the 1991 elections, to get back a little at her because she spoke for me at a meeting at Cave Hill where she mounted the platform by going up on some beer cases, but on coming down she slipped and fell. I then said to her that if a photographer was up here she would not be able to get a single vote, neither here nor in the City.

Mr. Speaker, we had a very good relationship. One thing she instilled in me in my political life was the whole issue of loyalty. Billie Miller knows no disloyalty at all. I myself spread myself on that approach as well to my political life. There is no scope in Billie's mind for any real or unnecessary criticism, any callous criticism or any destructive criticism of the Barbados Labour Party.

She knows nothing but the Barbados Labour Party. Even in conversations one on one, in close small gatherings or behind closed doors, she does not even then tolerate any unnecessary criticism of her Party. She sees the Barbados Labour Party as her Party and she has always instilled in me this concept of loyalty.

She has obviously done a very good job as a parliamentary representative. The people of the City certainly hold that view which is evident by the fact that they have returned her now on every occasion except once. Therefore, she is very well loved by her constituents.

Mr. Speaker, she would not have it any other way. There is no persuading or any mentioning jokingly to Billie any possibility of representing another constituency. When it was mischievously put out some years ago that she was going to switch constituencies and she was confronted about it, I remember her vehemently denying that could ever happen. For her the only ones who really exist in a meaningful and significant way in her life are the constituents of the City and she would never have it any other way.

Mr. Speaker, having gone to a number of places and meetings particularly to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Meeting in Australia which I had the honour to lead the Barbados delegation, all that was being asked of me or said to me throughout the entirety of the Conference was: "How is Dame Billie; how is Miss Miller; how is she doing; we miss her; we wish her well; please make sure you extend to her on our behalf when you get back home our warmest greetings and we wish her well in her political life". Dame Billie was well known for her tremendous contribution and assistance in these fora. We all know of her record ministerially as well as internationally.

Mr. Speaker, she also bears, as was said earlier, no malice whatsoever. It has not always been smooth between the two of us but there was never any malice from either side. Human beings are going to disagree. Of course I always had to recognise that she was older than me and therefore I had to respect her age as well, but that does not mean that she is old. Certainly there were times when we

did not necessarily see eye to eye either in terms of party politics or policy matters.

Anytime there was any disagreement and she spoke to me in harsh terms, you could always be sure that she would see me the next day or an hour later and continue speaking to me as if nothing at all had happened, something I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I have not quite perfected the art of doing, but I certainly do not carry any malice either.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that is true of Billie is that she carries no malice. I would also go to say that the other side of the coin is also true. There is nothing that you could really say to Billie that would get her angry very easily or that would make her become furious and would want to respond to you in any serious way for too long. I guess it is all part of the human nature that people are to disagree, but at the end of the day life has to go on in perfect harmony, in unison and in love.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is no one more appropriate for the honour recently bestowed upon Dame Billie than Dame Billie herself. Dame Billie, through the Speaker, I congratulate you and wish you well.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I too would wish to associate myself with all the remarks that were made by Honourable Members today and to congratulate Dame Billie Antoinette Miller on her achievements so far in terms of the international arena as well as at home.

House 22 Sequence 25

3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Speaker, I believe Dame Billie was born for the job. Her father before her had served for 18 years representing the constituency of St. George, where she was well known. In fact, during the 1970s, at one stage we felt that when it was time to elect a candidate, that she would have represented the people of St. George but instead, the by-election of 1976 saw her representing the City. We very much regretted the fact that she did not represent St. George, but the City seemed to have been for the lady, Billie.

Mr. Speaker, her achievements have been noted by other Honourable Members but, I think, to her credit the greatest achievement has to be her representation of the City. She has seen the restoration of the City Hall, the Spirit Bond, the Bridgetown Road Rehabilitation Programme, which has taken place over the last three years, the restoration of Baxters Road, the development of Swan Street, and the greening of the City, which she is hoping to achieve during this term of office. These are achievements that have taken place over the last number of years.

Sir, other Honourable Members have spoken to the London Bourne Towers and to Cat's Castle but I

have seen her at work when we were looking to build those Towers at Pondside. The Honourable Member had fought long and hard to ensure that the building of London Bourne Towers was erected as is today. Sir, to those persons who do not know, while I was Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment, those housing plans went through many changes, with the Honourable Member for the City directing most of its affairs.

In fact, there was a time when I thought that the civil servants were fearful of her but I now know that they had not only respected her, but had loved her dearly. I speak of many architects, labourers and draughtsmen, who came close to her, who respected her views and, in the end, felt that her suggestions had made the difference. That is why the London Bourne Towers would be remembered for what the Honourable Member for the City has been able to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, another great contribution that the Honourable Member for the City has made is that of the achievement in the development of the Polyclinics. I do not know if any Honourable Member has spoken to the fact that it was during the period 1976 to 1986 that the Polyclinics were first developed in this country, and we owe a great deal of gratitude to her for her foresightedness.

Sir, the Polyclinics were, indeed, a dream which she had, which would have been a forerunner of a national health service. In the past, we could have only hoped to see the National Health Service being realised, but it has always been one of her dreams. Now that this has been realised, all Barbadians who attend the Polyclinics should remember that it was Dame Billie who has fought long and hard, to ensure that these clinics were built.

Mr. Speaker, Dame Billie is not only a good representative like her father but is one who is well-read and well-dressed. I believe we could emulate much of what the Honourable Member stands for. Since coming to the Honourable House in 1994, whenever the representative for the City is in the House, she is in her seat.

Sir, while the Honourable House is in session, I do not ever remember seeing the Honourable Member for the City in the Members' Gallery or in the dining room. She is always in her seat paying attention to the debate. I believe if there is one thing that young Honourable Members could emulate from her, is the need to pay more attention to the Sittings of the Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I have tried my best. Sometimes I am not as fortunate or as consistent as the Honourable Member but I try to be here as often as I can. If Honourable Members would emulate the Honourable Member for the City, then we should learn from her.

Mr. Speaker, other Honourable Members have spoken to the fact that she holds no malice and has always been able to get the job done. I have always admired how she chairs meetings. I admire the way she makes plans by writing everything in her diary. Sir, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, she has to travel abroad, but would call and inform us about scheduling meetings with her on her return to the country. That is, indeed, a very admirable thing about her.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the Honourable Member for the City would put the restoration of the West Wing of Parliament in her plans to help us. The Ministry of Public Works is planning this area and I hope that the Honourable Member for the City could help us in our planning.

Mr. Speaker, Billie Antoinette Miller has served this Parliament and Barbados well. The people of St. George are very fond of her. The surname "Miller" will always be remembered. When historians write the history of Barbados, her name would be reckoned as one of the most influential politicians of this Century.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of St. George, I would like to congratulate her and hope that she has many years of success and health.

I thank you.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker. I want to use this occasion to join with all other Honourable Members of this Honourable Chamber, on the one hand to convey my sincerest appreciation and congratulations and on the other hand, for this tremendous honour that was bestowed upon her, for the tremendous work she has done throughout Barbados, particularly in her constituency and the other constituencies of St. Michael.

I want to use the universal grass-root terminology "respect due" to the Honourable Member for the City. Sir, the name "Billie Miller" is legendary in the political arena, not only here at home but both regionally and international as an outstanding daughter of our soil.

I believe some Honourable Members have spoken to the fact that she is a champion among the Non-Governmental Organisation's movement. I remembered having a very serious conversation with her, in respect to the non-Governmental Organisation's movement across the world, and was amazed at the fact that this lady was able to have single-handedly organised a massive Non-Governmental Organisation Conference in Cairo, Egypt, against the best wishes of the United Nations Movement at that time.

Whenever one travels to these international Conferences and talks about the Non-Governmental Organisation's development and its movement across the world, the name of Billie Miller is always at the forefront.

H:No. 21 (26)310 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

I believe Honourable Members know that she was involved in the drama group at Queens College and has written short plays in Bajan dialect along with Jeanette Layne-Clark. Sir, I take an interest in these things because I am also involved in drama. During the last Elections when I sat with her at the Barbados Labour Party headquarters, I noticed that she pays attention to fine detail so that, at the end of day, we could implement forcibly. Sir, I respect and admire her for her qualities.

During the Elections I remember going into Mahogany Lane where there was a big meeting. I anticipated that there would be a stage set up but instead I saw the people of the constituency and Dame

Billie with a horn talking to them. Sir, I could not believe it but that spot meeting turned out to be like a big meeting.

Mr. Speaker, the entire country knows of Dame Billie's fighting qualities. She is deserving of this honour and I want to wish her well. I also want to convey to her God's richest blessing particular to the vision she has of developing the City.

Finally, I want to remark that she is a "rootsy" woman, a scholar, lawyer, politician, exceptionally articulate and attractive. If we could take a time machine and travel backward, Hamilton Lashley would have loved to meet her then.

Dame Billie is an international diplomat. Recently, I saw her on the BBC talking about international trade matters. She is a role model and mentor. Sir, at the grassroots level she is what we call a "real top woman".

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish her well and I hope that the tremendous knowledge she has would be passed on to younger persons who want to get involved in politics.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to say congratulations to Dame Billie. I wish her every success in future and God's richest blessings.

Hon. J.X. WALCOTT: Mr. Speaker, it is a special honour for me today to congratulate the Honourable Member for the City on her elevation to Dame of St. Andrew. She is truly a remarkable, outstanding woman and politician who is respected not only locally but regional and internationally.

I was not as fortunate as some of my colleagues on This Side who spoke about interacting with her over the past few years in Cabinet but my memories of Dame Billie go back to 1976 when I was in sixth form. There was the by-elections in the City and a group of young people went from meeting to meeting following this young, bold and beautiful woman coming into politics which was an area only for men. As mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. James South, Dame Billie made a transformation and also made people conscious of the fact that women could achieve such things.

Sir, over the years she has continued to show that she is a formidable speaker, a very articulate person as well as a skillful debater and this has been shown locally, regionally and internationally over the years. She has been indefatigable and passionate in representing the issue of her constituency and in overseeing the transformation of the City to which a number of Honourable Members alluded to in their speeches earlier. They spoke of changes to London Bourne, Kensington Lodge, Cheapside Market, the Boardwalk, Baxters Road and the transformation of the Old Town Hall.

She has been committed and tireless over the years in pursuing what she believes in and especially in her loyalty to the Barbados Labour Party. This was manifested in 1986 when we were decimated and in August that same year, we convened a meeting in an effort to rebuilt the Party and put it back in control again in Barbados.

Sir, she has not been afraid to make difficult decisions. We know of the role she played in the establishment of the Bridgetown Sewerage Treatment Plant at a time when it meant the relocation of

residents from the Emmerton area where she had won 75 per cent of the votes in the previous elections. She felt it was for the national good and so she encouraged these residents to go to another part of Barbados.

We heard about the problems encountered with the Drug Service and a lot of people said it could not be done but, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church West said, it is now the model not only for this region but for Africa and some Mediterranean countries.

Sir, within six weeks of becoming a Minister there was the Cubana incidence. All services were alerted and she had to cope with various possible public health issues. It took a strong person to deal with those issues at that time.

She has not only been involved in politics but was active in the Family Planning Association and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. In spite of all of this, she found time every year for the Salvation Army, as could be seen with a bell assisting at the launch of their Xmas fund-raising appeal every year.

She is the longest serving Minister of Foreign Affairs at a difficult time when we are faced with globalisation, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, FTAA, the European Union and the WTO. In all these forums, she is well-respected.

H22/15:20Sequence 27

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. J.X. WALCOTT:

Sir, in spite of everything that has been going on, she has been travelling throughout this region trying to canvass support for the location of the Headquarters of the Free Trade Areas of the Americas in Port-of-Spain.

Mr. Speaker, I am not privileged, like others, to have served with her for a long time but in my short time in the Cabinet, I have been impressed and admired her for her thoroughness, the sound advice and the words of caution as we deliberate on the people's business.

I commend her again on her service to the citizens of this country and the region as a whole, and I truly think that she is deserving of this honour, which was recently conferred on her.

I thank you.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute to this debate conscious that we have had almost every Member who was present to speak today, with the exception of the Honourable Member for the City, and I speak as the last Member present, is by no means any accident, not simply as Leader of the House, but because it became clear from early that all the accomplishments of the Honourable Member for the City have been detailed comprehensively.

Therefore, the perspective that I would share with this House today would not relate to her magnificent accomplishments in the establishment of a Drug Service that has become the model for the Commonwealth; it would not relate to her achievements as the first woman to head the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; would not relate to her achievements in organising that massive Non-Governmental Conference in 1994 in Cairo, on which the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East spoke; would not relate her many achievements in the Ministries of Health, Education and now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade; would not relate to the fact that she stands not just as the longest serving Minister of Foreign Affairs in this country's history but as the longest serving Minister in this country's history, having served for 19 complete years and now in her 20th year as a Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Speaker, there are those who would suggest that there are very few Members of Cabinet in any other part of the Commonwealth that can, in fact, equal that record in circumstances, certainly, where flourishing democracies exist and not where people are ruled by the barrel of a gun.

Therefore, I realised from early this morning that what I would speak to was the woman who has been the Representative for the City of Bridgetown and certainly overseeing the affairs of Bridgetown than any other person in recent memory, including my grandfather, who served for 25 years; speaking of the woman who has distinguished herself as Barbados' Ambassador within international polity such that when Barbados' name is called, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the great kudos which we received is in somewhere influenced by the manner in which she has conducted our diplomacy over the course of the last decade; the woman who has known what it is to ensure that there is no chasm between her responsibilities as a policy maker at the national, regional and international level and her duties as a representative of the people in the City of Bridgetown.

Mr. Speaker, very often it is very difficult for people to excel in the various areas and spheres of public life. There are some who come and who would be excellent representative. There are some who come and become involved only in internal Party politics and should be excellent Branch organisers or Party administrators. There are some who come and have not a clue how to relate to people on the ground but who understand the creation of public policy in a way that will inure to the benefit of the State.

Mr. Speaker, there are very few persons, and Billie Miller taught me this very early in my days of politics, who are capable of excelling at every layer of public life. If I were to use a cricketing metaphor and to be able to categorise the role that she has played in Barbadian public life, I would have to suggest that she is an "all rounder", and in so suggesting that she is an "all rounder", that she is, perhaps, in my view, one of the best political 'all rounders' that we have had in public life since Independence.

Mr. Speaker, I do not say this lightly because I have had the opportunity to see her function, fortunately, at all levels over the course of the last 15 years, intimately. It was 15 years ago, this year, that I first became nominated to run in a constituency for the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, two years before I was nominated, I had the honour of working with the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown within political organisation within the Barbados Labour Party. Her example was one that all of us, who came into contact with her in those early days felt we had to follow. There was an understanding that there was no task too high or too low to be undertaken in public life once you

committed yourself to that course.

Mr. Speaker, she told us all the time that whether it is scrubbing toilets in the Barbados Labour Party Headquarters, preparing documents or speaking, whatever it was the Party had to do that accorded with good principle and decent behaviour, that we had a duty to it. Equally, in respect of how one comported oneself, both in and out of the public's glare, once again the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown was consistent in those things which she stands for, those things which she would tolerate and those things which she would admonish.

Sir, Honourable Members on both sides of this Honourable House have spoken at length about the manner in which her comments, her looks as well those things which will be, perhaps, a little more elevated than comments because of the composition of the language, that how they have all influenced each and every one of us to understand that we are part of an institution that is greater than each and every one of us, and that there are traditions and standards which must be respected.

In those circumstance, Mr. Speaker, I say to you that she has in truth and in fact been the guardian of the values and traditions, not just of the Barbados Labour Party but of this Parliament and, indeed, the wider country.

I believe that is one of her great contributions. It is her fortune to have spanned generations. There are those who came into politics, in the mid 1960s and early 1970s, most of whom, with the exception of herself and the Honourable Member for St. George South, have left this Parliament. There are those who are on the cusp, like herself and the Honourable Member for St. George South, although he may not wish to hear me say so, and there are those who came in the generation with the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Then there are those like the Honourable Members for St. George North, St. Michael North, myself and others who came to the Barbados Labour Party in the late 1980s after that defeat, committed to the rebuilding of this Party, ensuring that once again we will have the opportunity to be able to improve the lives of people in this country, rooted in a tradition and a philosophy which was formed out of the sufferings of the 1930s.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, we represented the beginning of that other generation, but the Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown fell between the likes of Sir Harold St. John, Tom Adams, Sir Henry Forde and then this generation which the Honourable Member for St. Peter and most of us in here represent.

H22: 15.30 p.m.Sequence 28

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Continuation of Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

Therefore, that straddling of generations has led to her being able to take that tradition and that heritage to be able to take the best from it, to pass on to us and to ensure that the stability which we take for granted in this country, in the building of our democracy is not squandered, simply because no one

has taken the time to make the difference in ensuring that those who have come know what is expected of them.

Mr. Speaker, I do not speak in any partisan way when I say that in a very real sense the strength of political parties is guaranteed by persons being prepared to play that role, at the points of inter-generation transmissions of leadership, not just the ultimate political leader, but the leadership throughout the party, in terms of people who work behind the scenes, in terms of Members of Parliament, administrators and these kinds of things. Unless you have that passing on of knowledge, customs and moorings, then, you are not able to maintain the strength and security of the institution.

Mr. Speaker, that is the side as it relates to the political party. The Honourable Member for St. John spoke and said that the quality which he admired the most in the Honourable Member for the City was her loyalty. If you were to ask anybody in Barbados what value comes to mind when you hear Billie Miller's name, the one thing they would say to you is her loyalty. Sir, her loyalty to the Barbados Labour Party has been exemplary.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I can say, without fear of contradiction that she has never put the interest of herself above the interest of the Barbados Labour Party and that of Barbados. This is an amazing virtue. It is one that many of us in this day, where the pace of life, and the lack of strong commitments may cause people to float easily throughout their various atmospheres, for want of a better phrase, but that rooting and that commitment is an example which we would all do well to follow.

Mr. Speaker, were I to sit at this point would suggest that my appreciation for the life and work of Billie Miller which is still ongoing, and it is not meant in any way for this debate to have the flavour of an obituary, political or otherwise. I can assure you that her energy is as strong and her commitment as deep as serving the people in the City of Bridgetown, as it was in 1976 when she entered.

Sir, were I to stop at this point, I would not be doing justice to the woman whom I have had the pleasure for getting to know over the course of the last 24 years of my life. I first had the honour of meeting her when I was still at school. Many people do not know that she was the one who gave me the bad news about my "A" level results on a Saturday morning.

As I walked into her house, she was peeling potatoes. She did not look up, she knew it was I, she continued peeling and said, you did exactly as you said you would do, a "B", a "C", an "E", the only thing you got an "A" in is the General Paper which you did not have to work for, and I would never forget those words.

The truth was that those words, however, marked her having to shepherd my passage to university, because, in spite of my not getting the grades that I wanted, I was admitted into the one university that I had applied for, the London School of Economics. My father was so upset with me that he felt I should go back to school and redo "A" Levels. Billie Miller and one other person, day by day over the course of a week, ensured that in speaking to my father, I was given the opportunity to go off to the London School of Economics and participate in an institution, which I believe, has further helped shaped me and made me who I am today.

I therefore am eternally grateful to her for the role she played, because she could quite easily have

stepped back, and to take on a father's ambitions that have been thwarted, is an act of tremendous courage, even from the Minister of Education in those days, for they often know no form of reason. Sir, that kind of mentoring continued throughout her time in Government. Every time she passed through London, I was given the opportunity to be fed or be carried somewhere.

Mr. Speaker, being in this job now, I understand the demands upon your time, and for her to have taken that time out each time she was on her way to somewhere else, to ensure that she looked after, called and checked after my welfare, is a matter that has been one that I have appreciated very much.

Suffice it to say that I really do feel, and I say so publicly for the first time, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown has been a mentor for me, since my teenage years. She has helped to shepherd me to this point safely thus far and I am eternally grateful for that continued role. This does not mean that we do not disagree. This does not mean we do not argue. This does not mean that we do not have different perspectives, but I know at every stage that nothing she says to me is either motivated by malice, ill-will or anything that is deleterious to my welfare.

The confidence I have been able to enjoy while relating to her over the course of the last 24 years has been, in my view, the greatest asset of our relationship and friendship in politics and outside of politics. It is true to say, and there are some who will tell you that they knew that already.

Other than my parents and one other person who played a serious role in mentoring me, Billie Miller has been one of the persons who has most influenced my life, my values and my commitment in public life in particular, thus far. The understanding that honesty and integrity are essential characteristics to public life, the understanding that you have to accept the consequences of your choices, if you are truly not only to be an adult but to be responsible, and sometimes she did it in the harshest of ways.

I also remember having a disagreement with my parents, having come back from England early. She said to me, "Go back home because if you do not go home and face up to the consequences of it, you will never learn how to treat with conflict and you will remain in a rut running from things for the rest of your life." These are the small lessons that have come to guide us, and to allow us to make other judgments in life, based on that early guidance and support which of necessity must go beyond the familial home, if you truly are to become rooted.

Her commitment to giving service outside of political life has also been a mantra that she has recited over and over, that it is not just within the walls of the Barbados Labour Party that you must give service, but giving service relates to other forms of activity and community activity that speak to the betterment of people's lives. While there is a sense that everything we do has an element of politics, partisan politics must not intrude on people's ability to give service, in the broader community and to be able to help build the lives of individuals, communities, and this country.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of no person more worthy of the honour of Dame of St. Andrew. I have not spoken yet about the fact that she has distinguished herself for all time, as the first woman to hold Cabinet office in this country, or that she has distinguished herself for all time as the first woman to become Deputy Prime Minister of this country.

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Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Those things have the capacity to be recorded and read by generations, yet unborn, but the tangible benefit of that achievement may well be lost on those who are not yet born, for they do not appreciate the barriers that had to be overcome by women wanting to enter public life at a time when that was not deemed to be the acceptable mode of participation for women.

Mr. Speaker, it became easier for my generation to contemplate that existence in public life because even though it was only Billie, there was still Billie. Therefore, one wonders the magnitude of the task which she undertook in 1976 in coming to the determination that she would seek to enter Parliament in circumstances where this Parliament had never known what it was to have more than one woman in its membership at anytime and where the Cabinet had never known what it was to have a woman occupy the seats within Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, I would venture to say that history in a sense never captured the context or the magnitude of the decision that would have had to be made to confront that obstacle because we do not look at the intangibles that clothe the environment at the time at which those decisions were made.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it reflects a single courage that is not known to occupy the hearts of many people, for human beings by nature prefer to do what others are doing and very often do not like the feeling of being alone and having to blaze a trail, because with it comes the positive and the negative, and the true and full knowledge that only you and you are going through this experience, or blazing this trail at this time.

Even though persons like myself and the Honourable Members for St. James South and St. Thomas know what it is to be in a Parliament where there are few women, we could never understand the magnitude of the decision that confronted her in 1976 when my father resigned as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown and she was asked to run as the candidate for the Barbados Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, because the resignation was also not expected, and because the decision had to be made in a short period of time, all the more reasons why I give credit to her today for that courage.

Mr. Speaker, I truly do believe that within every Party there is an element that causes an even keel to be kept within the state of that balance of the ship. Billie Miller has been the person responsible for maintaining that even keel, certainly within my knowledge, of the Barbados Labour Party between the end of the last generation who would have now departed, except for the Honourable Member for St. George South, and this generation.

Therefore, it is not only about the transmission of values and traditions, it is also about the ability to be able to take stock to see the big picture to be able to cause one to reflect and to be able to take decisions that ultimately go beyond the immediate, bearing in mind that the interest of the Party and the interest of the country remain paramount in all that we do.

Mr. Speaker, I consider it a distinct privilege and honour to have had the opportunity to serve

alongside the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, so whatever else may come her way, I know it would be truly and well deserved. I know what it is, as I said, to have had her counsel and to benefit from her mentoring from school days. The encouragement she gave the Honourable Member for St. James South when she was elected was similarly rendered to me when she wrote me upon my election as well.

There are things, Mr. Speaker, that I shall not share here today but suffice it to say that it has been a distinct honour and privilege to be given an opportunity to work alongside someone whom you have considered to be your mentor. Mr. Speaker, not many people are given that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, in the same way in which she had reflected her steadfastness, her commitment and her loyalty to her task, I imagine that if she is ever given the chance to speak today, she will recite from the Talmud that she is not obliged to complete the task, neither is she at liberty to resile from it. Mr. Speaker, every time she is confronted with a task, she repeats those words reflecting that commitment and steadfastness of which I just spoke.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure that the Honourable Members on the Other Side would agree with me, that Barbados has been truly blessed to have had the fortune of someone coming to public life with the skills, character and indeed the commitment of Dame Billie. There are those in other islands who recognise her value and would wish that they could have someone of equal standing. Her work and her testimony stand as an inspiration not just to young Barbadian women but to all Barbadians of what is possible if one is committed and steadfast and is willing to put their shoulders to the wheel.

Through the Speaker, I congratulate you Dame Billie Antoinette Miller. It is ours today to salute you. We owe you a deep debt of gratitude as a nation for that which you have sacrificed in order to be able to help achieve for the people of this country.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members as you know this is one of the grave disadvantages of being the Speaker, but you would forgive me if I may say just a few very brief words. In fact, this Chair is very pleased to be associated with the sentiments expressed by Honourable Members about what I would call a really truly great Barbadian patriot, Dame Billie Miller.

Madam, your service, your dedication and your commitment to our country and its people has been exemplary. You have been a wonderful and outstanding help to everyone of us as we all stated here today. You have been a guide to everyone of us here, especially to me when I came to this position of Speaker without any parliamentary experience. You took me into your arms and showed me all the ropes relating to the procedures of Parliament and so on. That was a time when you were the teacher and I was definitely the student. Your kindness to my family and me, especially during my time of illnesses, would always be appreciated. I think that this honour is truly deserved.

On behalf of the officers and the staff of Parliament, my constituents, my family and me, I offer you my most sincere congratulations.

This House with acclaim accepts the Resolution of Congratulations and so directs the Clerk that the necessary Resolution be sent to, you, Dame Billie Miller.

I thank you.

House 22 Sequence 30

3:50 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

The Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am truly overwhelmed at the kindness and generosity of all Honourable Members. Today I am absolutely amazed.

It has never occurred to me, and it would have never occurred to me, had I not heard today of the keen interest in which Honourable Members have taken over the years in my career path, in my antecedents, my little anecdotes and my kind and generous observances. Therefore, I must start by thanking Honourable Members very deeply and very sincerely for all the sentiments that have been expressed today.

Sir, in a way my life in this Parliament is coming full circle, when I reflect that in 1976 when I first entered this Honourable Chamber, I was received in abject and absolute silence, no words of welcome were offered to me. Sir, it has said a lot, not so much for me but for the Barbadian character, for this Honourable Chamber and everything that it represents in Barbadian life and that in our democracy nearly 28 years later, that I would be showered with such praise and honour on the Floor of this Honourable House.

Sir, I have to say that it is a very humbling experience for me and that humility is not a virtue that I have experienced much in my life. In fact, on the night of the by-election when it was clear that I had won, this was one of the first things that was put to me. Therefore, in a manner of speaking, this is one of the few humbling experiences of my life and I do cherish it.

Sir, we are speaking under an item on our Order Paper which could either be Congratulatory or Obituary and needless to say, I am very pleased that I am able to be alive today, to enjoy the respect and the honour which my parliamentary colleagues and others would have offered today.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that I should be so honoured is coming as part of a number of things that are happening in my life, virtually at the same time. This is happening at a time when I have achieved my 60th year. I continue to be amazed at this because it does not feel as though I have been on earth for that long, and I am not one of those women who is suave as not to want to say this aloud. I am saying it to everybody. I can hardly believe it myself but, in this last year, much honour has come to me, and I am deeply appreciative and grateful for it all.

Sir, one of the honours that has come to me is that I have been made a Senior Minister and I wish to use this opportunity to say "thank you" very publicly to the Right Honourable Prime Minister of Barbados in whose gift this lies exclusively.

In the Commonwealth the post of Senior Minister, up until this time, has been bestowed on very few persons. In fact, there are only two known to me but who have been former Prime Ministers who continue to sit in a Cabinet. It is true in Singapore and it was true in Belize.

Sir, this is a very special honour. It is the first time in the Commonwealth that the title of “Senior Minister” is being accorded to someone who has been a former Deputy Prime Minister. I have very recently returned from a very gruelling Commonwealth mission around in the capitals of the world, together with two other Ministers from Fiji and Nigeria, where we were seeking to accelerate the political momentum for a return to the negotiating table in respect to the Doha Development Round. This is in the context of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Sir, at the end of the mission, we had to go back to the Commonwealth Secretariat to debrief. It so happened that a former Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Nigerian Chief Ameka Anyaoku was going to be launching his biography “Eye of Fire” in the Secretariat at the very time that I was there.

There were a number of people there to congratulate him on his book and I just happened to have been there at the time. He commented upon my honour and so did others. I could have only said to them that I would have to attribute it to the great generosity of the Prime Minister of Barbados and to him, I wish to say a deep thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to Barbados and that I had felt that if I were to be made a Dame, and indeed I have been made a Dame, that it would have been fit and proper that it would be the Dame of St. Andrew in the Order of Barbados. I do not think that anything else would have better suited me.

Mr. Speaker, with humility I receive this accolade and highest of honour which Barbados can offer. In recent weeks, I have chosen to dedicate it to the memory of those who have nurtured me but in a career that has been marked, perhaps more by ups than by downs, I would have to say that the thanks that I offer to my honourable colleagues and to this Honourable House today, have to be within the context of, first of all, what I give to my beloved City of Bridgetown. That is the context of my civic contribution to Barbados.

Sir, some Honourable Members have been very kind and generous to have suggested that it goes wider, that it is a regional, national and international contribution that has been made, but rising above all and my horizon for all always, is the City of Bridgetown, and I make no apology for that.

Mr. Speaker, everything has been said to this Parliament and there is very little that I could add. I try to give guidance where I can. The 20 years as a Honourable Member of the Cabinet of Barbados in the Commonwealth is, I would have to admit, a high achievement.

H:No. 21 (31)400 p.m.

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of the Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

I have to thank those men and women who have afforded me this opportunity because all these things could never have been done by oneself. I have been fortunate because, for the first eight years that I practised Law at the Bar, I was the only woman in private practice. The first 19 years in this House I was alone as a woman and I am grateful to those men who have nurtured me.

Sir, it pleases me that today there are about 50 per cent women practising at the Bar and that there are more women in this House. It also pleases me that Prime Minister Arthur had the courage and saw it fit to put all those women in both Houses of Parliament and in his Cabinet. Sir, he is a man of great courage and foresight. I believe in years to come, as other women come to this Parliament, we will justify the confidence that the electorate and our colleagues have put in us.

I have said this before but it bears repetition. Sir, apart from the Honourable Member for St. George South, I am the oldest Member in this House and I would like to exhort Honourable Members, particularly those who are relatively new to this Parliament, that it is important that they should come here prepared for the work of Parliament. It is inconceivable that any Member should come to the Floor of this Chamber with an Order Paper still folded in its bag. Sir, even those who recently came to Parliament in May last year would recognise how improved the quality of the debates are when Members have done their research and have thought long and carefully within the context of whatever is their policy framework, depending on which side of the House they sit on.

Sir, Honourable Members would also recognise that the way they speak and the way in which the debate allows for repartee, the cut and thrust of it, that the more they have prepared themselves as individuals and as a Party, the better would be their performance here. Sir, this is what those who elected us look to us for.

This is the highest committee of the land. It is what is expected of us and we must not fall below the expectations of this very proud and wonderful country which we serve. We must always remember that we are truly the servants of the people. As politicians we tend to be much abused but this is universal and how it is with politicians everywhere in the world. Sir, this is part of the wonder and genius of the Barbadian democracy.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a little country where Barbadians chose to have a greater number of Members of Parliament than be a member in Parliament with a larger constituency so that they would be robbed of a one on one interface. On this island, our constituents expect us to know them by name and they expect us to interface with them on a one-on-one basis whenever the occasion requires it.

Sir, this is a special thing and something I hope we would treasure and respect. I have sought to cultivate this in the 28 years, whether in Parliament or out of it so that, in a way, my constituents carry me more than I carry them, in a manner of speaking. Sir, I think that is how it should be because we are the servants of the people.

The former Prime Minister, Tom Adams used to say that you should never be less than honest and that you should always speak the truth to the House of Assembly. Sir, this comes out of the wellspring of my experience and I want to exhort Honourable Members to do this.

Mr. Speaker, the next exhortation is one that you would want to endorse and that is to respect the House. Sir, the day we do not respect the House, in these days of modern communications, it would be instantly communicated to people as we must never underestimate the man in the street. The truth is, they are ahead of us rather than the other way around and are sensitive to every nuance.

The electorate of Barbados is generous and it honours and respects its representatives once it feels that it is a mutual understanding, that the representatives have their interest at the apex and nothing is more important than that.

Mr. Speaker, in my judgement, we must respect the House remembering those who came before us. In the last 28 years, I have always been conscious of the distinguished Barbadians who were Members of Parliament and who represented the City of Bridgetown before me as some of them have become National Heroes.

Mr. Speaker, I could not fail to mention that I have also been conscious of my family connections. This is a Chamber in which my father and brother sat. It is also the first occasion on which two brothers sat in this Chamber at the same time representing the parish of St. George and the City of Bridgetown. I have said in another place that the family to which I belong and which nurtured me that there is no telling, in any particular generation, which of us will come to public or civic service.

H22/16:10Sequence 32

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of the Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

It never would have, in my wildest dreams, occurred to me in May 1976 that on the one occasion when I lost my seat that I would have lost it to my first cousin, but I always hasten to say that I won it back on the next Election, and I continue to hold it.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: It pleases me greatly today, that coming from another generation, that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West now comes as a member of the family to give him public service and civic service to Christ Church West and I believe in the years to come to the wider Barbados and, perhaps, beyond that as well so that there is a tradition of public service. I am happy that I have made my antecedents proud in that way. Sir, it does not always come to one in one's lifetime but this can happen and I believe that I am very fortunate that it could happen to me.

Mr. Speaker, I am also much humbled by the way in which so many Honourable Members today have spoken to the fact of some element of guidance and influence that I would have had upon lives and political careers. This, again, never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined that this would have come to me in my time, this too is pleasing.

Sir, it is difficult...

Aside.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: It is not to become emotional at a time like this but there are a number of men, going back to the early years in this Parliament, who in their term, as some Honourable Members are saying that in my term I am influencing people, who influenced me greatly. I have to say that one of those persons was Tom Adams, who was so enlightened that he thought a young woman of 31 years was a person who could grace his Cabinet. I have to pay tribute to him.

Indeed, all of the Prime Ministers with whom I worked allowed me as a Minister of Health and Social Security, Minister of Education and Culture and then as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Business, Tourism and now Foreign Trade, to work my vision and to work my dream, not only for Bridgetown, and that has taken a long time, but I like to think that the momentum is there and that process will continue for many years to come.

Sir, within a portfolio, as a Minister sitting in a Cabinet dominated by men, to have been given that privilege, I think, made all the difference and I must, on this occasion say how deeply grateful and thankful I am that I was permitted to do that.

Sir, Harold St. John was my Master-in Chambers, a mentor and my friend. A lot of what I learned to do in the Barbados Labour Party was through his example. What I learned and how I behaved as a Cabinet Minister was through his example as well and I want to say a very special thanks to him. I also want to say thanks to Sir Henry Forde because these were the men with whom I served as Leaders in the Barbados Labour Party.

I also want to say a word about those who led in the Opposition because you learn the important lessons of this life, not only from those who are disposed to nurture you, stand by your side and encourage you but you also learn very valuable lessons from those who will dispute the passage with you.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: The Right Excellent Errol Barrow was the first Leader of the Opposition with whom I worked and then later on with Sir Lloyd Sandiford. I also worked with Sir Frederick Smith for a short period. Mr. Speaker, those were turbulent days in this Honourable House. The reality is, this House is very tamed and some days I think a very timid shadow of what the House was when I first came to it and it can do with a little more rumbustiousness because people debated and argued, and that is a good thing.

Sir, working with Leaders of the Opposition was as instructive, sometimes, as working with a Prime Minister.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John was a Leader of the Opposition with whom I worked, in fact, he made reference to it when he rose to speak earlier today. At a time when I was a Leader of Government Business of the House and he was Leader of the

Opposition, we found ground on which we could work.

He made some reference that my motor car was not a taxi. He did not go on to say that many mornings when he lived in Fitts Village, that I gave him a lift to school at Combermere. On each occasion as I drove him to school, I would remind him that I was doing it only because he needed to get a proper education.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I did nothing to influence him in his politics and, of course, there was nothing that he could do to influence my politics.

Sir, I have tried to be evenhanded in my years in this Chamber. I tried to be as courteous and to be as giving on both sides of the House. I admire people who come here. I have very full appreciation of what it takes to give and to sacrifice to be a Member of Parliament in a place like Barbados and I have a very healthy respect for Members on both sides and do not hesitate, as has been said today, to give active encouragement to young Parliamentarians on both sides of the House because that was offered to me.

Mr. Speaker, the very first day I came in here, although I was formally welcomed, Mr. Edwy Talma was sitting on the Other Side of the Floor and he sent a little note over to suggest to me that it would be a very nice gesture if I would table a Resolution very quickly. Sir, remember, we were in Opposition. I thank him for it and I did exactly that. It was a Resolution which spoke to a baby crush, that was his idea, for the City of Bridgetown.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Then my constituents quickly make it known to me that housing was their number one priority and then that became my number one priority.

H22: 16.20 p.m.

Sequence 33

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Continuation of the Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

I am pleased to say that at London Bourne we now have a baby crèche, a day care centre as we call it now, incorporated into it.

Mr. Speaker, I am not one to stand on a lot of ceremony. I like things to be done in the proper way and that has been said. Sir, people call me everything now. I am called Dame Billie, some people call me Dame Antoinette, one person wrote to me as Dame Ann, and I have been called Lady Miller.

The truth of the matter is, Sir, I am still very much the Billie Miller who I am, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, and that is not likely to change, but do not mistake it for any lack of appreciation of this enormous honour, together with other honours which have been heaped upon me, in recent times.

Sir, to be accorded the highest honour that your country can offer, is the ultimate. I receive it graciously and I use this opportunity, finally, again, Sir, to thank the people of Barbados and those who wish me well. We cannot see what is in the future, Mr. Speaker, but I continue to represent the people of the City of Bridgetown to the best of my ability. When I leave this House this afternoon, it is to that constituency that I must go.

There is work to be done and I will continue as long as I am able, and it is the wish of the people to represent their interest in this House. As long as I am able, I will give as my strength and talent allow to the City of Bridgetown and to this Chamber.

Sir, when the day comes, I will step aside for a younger person. I am a great believer in bringing on and encouraging young people. I am not one to kick down the ladder behind me. I like to see as many young people climbing up as possible because that is the future.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that this day's Sitting is unprecedented. I knew that this matter will be raised today, but, I would never have thought that it would continue well into the afternoon, and that this item would have employed the interest and the sustained interest of Parliamentarians.

I take it as a mark of the respect and honour in which I am held and I am grateful to Honourable Members that this day has virtually been given over to the Resolution of Congratulation which I receive, Sir, with humility and with the deepest and most sincere appreciation.

The House has honoured me in a way that I had never thought would happen in my time. I am not sure that there are many among the young new Parliamentarians coming to this Parliament now, who would be prepared to give 30 years of their lives to this Parliament, or indeed to anything. It is a different time in which we live and I recognise that.

Very few bright young people today are going to give 33, 34 or 40 years to a job, whether in the Government service or in the private sector. It is not the way of the world in these days and I suspect that very few people coming into Parliament now would be prepared to make the sacrifice of 30 years.

I have to say, Sir, there are absolutely no regrets. In my opinion there is no higher service that you can offer, than service to your country, in this way. Not everyone wants to be a parliamentarian, happily, not everyone can be a parliamentarian. There were some who have come into this House and discovered that it was not what they thought it was going to be, and very quickly, wanted to be out of it, and were not happy when they were here.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Oh that is a fact and in every Parliament, you can point them out.

There are some, and the majority of us, Sir, who come here and know what our duty is, who know what our vision is and we are prepared to give service at this highest level to this little, but a singular and beautiful island of Barbados.

Again, I do not regret a moment of it. I think that this is what I like doing best and I think, although I know that my detractors will not agree with me, that this is what I am best at doing. Mr. Speaker, I take my seat, a very happy woman today and one much honoured and one feeling great appreciation.

Many people go through public life and they sometimes feel that it has not been as greatly appreciated as it might have been. I cannot say that, and for that I thank you, Sir, and Honourable Members of this House.

I am so much obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we will continue with the Orders. We have not finished them as yet.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is not proposed for us to continue any further with Government's Business today, given the lateness of the hour. The Congratulatory Speeches which we engaged in, in respect of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, reflected a complete participation on the part of all Honourable Members of the House, and therefore, we were engaged from a quarter pass ten, until now.

In the circumstances, Sir, I beg to move that this House be now adjourned until Tuesday 2nd March at 10:00 a.m.

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

The question that the House be now adjourned until Tuesday, 2nd March at 10:00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

House 22, sequence 34, 16:3008

