THE

SENATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2003 – 2008

THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Wednesday, June 23, 2004, at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour Senator Sir Fred GOLLOP, K.A. (President)

Senator the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH, G.C.M., J.P. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (Leader of Senate)

Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia SYMMONDS, D.B.E., G.C.M., B.A. (Deputy President)

Senator T. E. BARKER, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Econ.) J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Senator the Hon. J. E. D. WILLIAMS, B.Sc., M.B.A., J.P. (Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of the Civil Service)

Senator Sir John Stanley GODDARD, K.A., G.C.M., B.Com., F.C.A., Hon. LL.D. (U.W.I.)

Senator B. R. COLLYMORE, C.M.G.

Senator R. W. GRANT, B.A. (Econ) (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and International Transport)

Senator the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND, LL.B., LL.M (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)

Senator I. St. C. LINTON

Senator G. P. B. NICHOLLS, B.Sc., LL.B.

Senator Miss P. E. PARRIS, J.P.

Senator G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL

Senator Miss S. C. V. HUSBANDS, B.A. (Hons.)

Senator F. J. STUART, B.A., LL.M.

Senator Dr. D. S. LOWE, Dip. Theology, B.A., MED., ED.D.

Senator the Very Reverend H. E. CRICHLOW, G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.) (Dunelm)

Senator Dr. F. L. CHANDLER, B.Sc. (Hons.) Ph.D.

Senator A. C. FIELDS

Prayers were led by the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow.

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is in Session.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Annual Report of the Barbados National Oil Company Limited for the year 2002 to 2003.

2. Annual Reports of the Barbados Tourism Authority for the years 1999 to 2000 and 2000 to 2001.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that Standing Order No. 22(1) be suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I would like to give notice of a Resolution for the Government to provide a guarantee for bonds to be issued to the Barbados Agriculture Management Company in the sum of $60 million for the purpose of financing the sugar industry.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr. PRESIDENT: Public Business is the Order of the day.

ORDER NO. 2 – TO APPROVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE OF THE PAYMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST NECESSARY FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE BONDS TO BE ISSUED BY THE BARBADOS AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT CO. LTD. IN THE SUM OF BDS$60 MILLION FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINANCING THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, the Resolution before us is seeking permission for the Government to guarantee bonds in the sum of $60 million to be issued by Citicorp Merchant Bank Limited and Royal Bank Limited of Trinidad and Tobago. The amount being provided by Citicorp is $40 million over a period of 12 years with an interest rate of 5.40 per cent, an arrangement fee of 0.5 per cent, a trustee fee of $5,000.00 per annum and a registrar's fee of $5,000.00 per annum. The amount being provided by Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago is $20 million over a period of 10 years with an interest rate of 5.75 per cent, an arrangement fee of 0.95 per cent. Bank of Trinidad and Tobago is $10 million over a period of ten years with an interest rate of 5.75 per cent, an arrangement fee of 0.95 per cent payable on the signing of the documentation, a Trustee fee of 4 800 per annum, a registrar fee of $4 000 per annum and the principal to be repaid at the end of a ten-year period. These bonds are being issued to provide financing for the Barbados Agricultural Management Company (BAMC) to cover the out-of-crop expenses.
11.20 a.m.

The Barbados Agricultural Management Company as Senators are aware, was formed in 1993 when it became necessary for the Government of that day to deal with the issue of the indebtedness of the plantations to the Barbados National Bank (BNB). The sum of money at that time was $138.3 million. As part of the then Structural Adjustment Programme, the Government had to deal with the issue of the balance sheet of the BNB. It was decided to form the company, by the name of the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust which inherited the debt from the BNB and the Government in turn, issued bonds and debentures to the BNB. The debt was now taken over by the BACT and the BNB balance sheet would have shown the receipt of bonds to the extent of the debt.

The BAMC was formed at the same time to be responsible for the management of the plantations. In addition to those plantations which were heavily indebted, and which were now liable to the BACT, the BAMC leased a number of plantations from owners who no longer had any interest in planting sugar but who were not indebted to the BNB. I want to make it clear that of the 45 plantations which the BAMC is currently managing, with an acreage of about 10 000, that all of them are not indebted plantations.

In fact, my advice is that out of 35 heavily indebted plantations which were taken over by the BACT, 27 of them have since been able to extinguish their debt through the sale of rab land, estate houses and other such measures, and only eight of those 35 plantations now remain in the state of indebtedness.

The point though is that the BAMC is currently managing 11 farm units, made up of 45 estates. I say farm units for the simple reason that, as part of the effort to bring about some efficiency in the industry, the BAMC decided to join plantations which were close to each other to share labour and equipment as a means of reducing some of their costs, instead of continuing the old practice of cultivating them on their own, and all of them having their own equipment and so on. A feature of them still remains, I must say, in relation to the industry, although not specifically with reference to the BAMC.

I am sure most of you will be surprised to hear that even today, the industry as a whole has 37 harvesters, while all the evidence shows that as an industry, it does not need more than about 15 or 16 harvesters. This is a practice brought forward from long ago when every plantation had its own equipment and labour. This practice is dying hard, apparently.

Even though 15 or 16 harvesters are needed, there are still 37 out there. I had complaints from a number of farmers to the effect that they have been charged as much as $40 per tonne to get a harvester to harvest their canes, when all the evidence shows that the cost should only be about $19 and that is one of the bad practices that has come forward from the industry. We are hoping that it will soon disappear.

The point though is, Mr. President, that the BAMC now manages these 45 estates which are put into 11 farm units. I have taken a number of measures to reduce its costs, over time. Efforts are also being made in the industry generally, but particularly in the BAMC to deal with the issue of farm management and to get the managers to follow good agricultural practices.

Those of you who keep up with what happens in agriculture know that even now, as a result of bad practices which have been in place over the years, we still lose a lot of top soil. The yield per acre of cane is below what it used to be and what it should be because of bad practices. Therefore, there is a need for persons in the industry to follow good practices and, through the BAMC we are trying to get that done.

The BAMC, in addition to the management of those 11 farm units, has a responsibility for the management of the two factories. When the arrangements were made in 1993, following the establishment of the BAMC and the BACT, the BAMC entered a lease with BSIL which had responsibility for the factories. The lease contained a section which gave the BAMC an option to purchase the assets. At the end of that lease, the BAMC exercised that option and took control of the assets of the sugar factories.

At that time there were three of them. Subsequently, the factory at Bulkeley was closed. This was an issue that a lot of people complained about and they still complain about. The truth is that the factory at Bulkeley was in a very bad state, and it would have taken a huge sum of money to bring it up to the required standard. While there may be some truth, in fact, that the site was more central, the issue at the time was the amount of money it would take to bring that factory up the required standard, so that factory was closed. It was a decision by the Board on which I was a member prior to 1994 but it was not implemented until after 1994.

The present situation is that there are two factories, as all of us know, one at Andrews and one at Portvale. I am pleased to say that this year, Portvale worked better than it has ever worked, in terms of the elimination of the down time. I do not know exactly what is responsible for that because there were many problems in the past.
11.30 a.m.

Mr. President, a few days ago I saw a statement from a person who had been associated with the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation and its management for at least seven years, that person was making reference to the effect that Government is too slow in dealing with the issues in the sugar industry.

Mr. President, as I heard it, it attracted my attention because I wanted to know who was making the statement. As I looked at it, I realised that the statement was coming from a gentleman who was a manager of the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation from its inception and who remained in that position for at least seven years, and who would have had at least seven years to get a number of the things done about which he now complains.

Sir, unfortunately nothing was done and it seems to me that it is always very easy to spend time in telling others what they should do, especially if other persons do not know that the individual or individuals making such statements would have had the opportunity to have done a number of those things but have not.

Mr. President, I want to make this point clear and in my presentation today I will deal with a number of issues in relation to what it is that this Government is doing. The Government has gotten involved in the management of the sugar industry from 1993 when these companies were created. The sugar industry was in existence in Barbados for as long as I can remember and even before that. In fact, sugar and Barbados go hand-in-hand from the days when Barbados was a colony.

I think that in a sense, that is part of the problem that the industry has experienced over the years. We all know that when Barbados was a colony producing raw materials for export to Europe, that there were certain protections put in place to safeguard the continued supply of those raw materials. That is how the sugar industry has developed in Barbados and in a number of the African/Caribbean and Pacific sugar producing countries.

When Europe started to move on a path of development that no longer required large quantities of raw materials from the colonies to fuel their economic growth, those industries started to lose significance. That is exactly what has happened with the sugar industry. The preferential arrangements have still remained in place but it is the very presence of those preferential arrangements that, in my view, prevented the managers of the sugar industry from taking the steps that they should have taken over the years. Sir, that informs us now that if we continue to rely on those arrangements, that this industry would be wiped out in a very short space of time.

Mr. President, the facts are that there is no way, even with the continuation of the preferential arrangements provided by the European Union (EU) that the sugar industry, in its present form, would survive. Barbados is a high-cost producer of sugar, the fields, though large within our context, are small. When I look at the size of Barbados in relation to the size of the sugar lands in Brazil, I see a picture which tells me that if by some magic method, we were to put the entire Barbados in sugar, it still would not be able to produce sugar to compete with Brazil, and for a number of reasons, one reason being the land mass. Therefore, we are not able to enjoy the types of economies of scale that the producers in Brazil can enjoy.

Mr. President, you will remember that I said the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation has tried to bring the farming community together to try to get to share equipment and labour as a means to cutting cost. Cost would be spread over a number of overheads than if persons were to work individually. Sir, even when that is done, the units would still be small. They are mere pieces of what a unit would be in Brazil.

Again in Brazil there is the issue of labour cost. In fact, when I was doing research sometime ago to become involved at the discussion of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on the challenge by Brazil, Thailand and Australia

on the sugar protocol, I looked at what a sugar worker in Brazil receives in a month. It was less than what a sugar worker in Barbados receives in one day. Therefore, there was no way that if Barbados were producing sugar on small areas of lands and at costs that were so different from those in Brazil, that Barbados would ever be able to compete with Brazil.

Mr. President, if we have a situation as we now have, where it costs us approximately $2 000 to produce one ton of sugar and the price from the European Union (EU) is about $l 200, there is a big gap there between cost and revenue, and there is no way that even with the efficiencies about which I spoke earlier, that Barbados would have been able to compete.

Mr. President, that is so even if the present regime continues but as all of us know, that regime is under threat. Before I deal with that, I want to make reference to another issue which the industry has encountered. As the price of sugar fell and as the cost of producing sugar rose, sugar naturally became less attractive to persons who had money to invest. We all then witnessed a gradual or a fairly rapid movement in the removal of land, not only from agriculture but from sugar in particular. That is one of the problems that the industry has suffered.

Mr. President, when I looked back to 1957, I realised that there were about 26 factories in Barbados and that we had over 76 000 acres of cane under cultivation, and that by 2003, there were two factories and that we had approximately 18 000 acres under cultivation. Therefore, we can see the shift away from sugar production. As I have said, that affected agriculture as a whole but it was not so rapid in relation to the other aspects of agriculture as it was to sugar but there has been a rapid decline in the acreage under cultivation and people switched their investments into other areas.

Mr. President, it, therefore, means that if we are to encourage persons who have money to invest in the sugar industry, that industry would have to be made more attractive. One knows the difficulties which agriculture generally has experienced in relation to land, labour, and capital, where there are other areas of activities which are more profitable and attractive and so the resources have moved in those directions.

I do not think that there would be a reversal of that and, in fact, it would be extremely difficult to bring it back into agriculture because as long as land is divided for housing development and for other purposes, it would always be lost.
11.40 a.m.

Sir, once lost always lost. Our view in this Administration is different to the view of other people when it comes to agriculture and sugar. We agree that the way forward for Barbados is the continued promotion of the services sector but that would be done while bringing along agriculture and manufacturing because it gives us the best opportunity to make full use of our resources. Currently, there are 5 200 persons employed in agriculture, 700 of whom are employed by the BAMC. It is conceivable that some of them could be retrained to move into other areas but it is unlikely that all can be retrained for those areas and then we have land, our natural resource.

We always speak about the issue of food security. In this context I speak of it from a national point of view, that is the ability to produce a reasonable amount of the food we eat. I do not believe we should allow ourselves to fall into the trap which a number of countries have found themselves where they rely entirely on other persons outside of their country to produce all the food they need. This is the objective which this Administration has set and which the Ministry of Education is busily pursuing. We look forward to the day when we will be able to guarantee the nation that a certain percentage of the food which they consume is produced locally. This means employment for the persons engaged in that but those persons who have invested in agriculture will be able to make reasonable returns on their investment as well.

Sir, from a strategic and security point of view, it is also important because if someone is feeding you then you are vulnerable especially if that someone changes from a friend to become an enemy so we have to focus on the issue of food security as well. This means that in addition to sugar there has to be an adequate amount of land available for other agriculture. This is what the Government is seeking to do in all the policies that it is developing to deal with the use of our resources.

Mr. President, if we look at the sugar industry in its present form and environment within which it now operates, then we can only come to the conclusion that something has to be done to change the industry from one where you simply export raw sugar to Europe and depend on the existing preferential arrangement to one where you can produce products that can be competitive.

The present arrangement is one where trade flows from the industry to Europe and is one way trade in the sense that it gets into Europe free of duty. Sir, a number of things will bring this to an end. Already, the Europeans have agreed that the least developed countries, under an initiative called Everything but Arms Initiative, means that the least developed countries will be able to export into Europe free of duty.

Sir, a number of these countries produce sugar and do so at a more competitive price than Barbados and on a larger

scale. For example, Vietnam produces several times the amount of sugar that Barbados produces. If those countries have access to the European markets free of duty in the same way that Barbados and the ACP countries can, we will no longer have an edge over the least developed countries.

Sir, there are other initiatives which are threats to our present existence. There are negotiations taking place in WTO on agriculture. Those negotiations are being conducted on three pillars, market access, domestic support and export competition. The outcome in those three areas is going to be against us as far as sugar and agriculture is concerned because other countries are seeking access to the markets of the developed countries including the European Union. Sir, Brazil, Australia and Thailand want access and this is the essence of their challenge to the sugar protocol. They are large producers and if they have access to the European Union markets, then we are going to be in trouble for the following reason. When they speak of access, they are making a case in WTO for the tariffs that exist to be reduced. In fact, some of those bigger countries are arguing for all tariffs eventually to be at zero. If all tariffs, including agriculture come to zero, then everybody will have free access as far as tariffs are concerned and small producers in Barbados will not be able to compete. This is why the existing sugar protocol is under threat.

Sir, even before we come to the conclusion of those negotiations, we have the challenge before the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism by Australia, Brazil and Thailand, ...and that may very well come to a conclusion even before the negotiations reach their final stage. Sir, if those three countries are successful in challenging that, the European Union will have to dismantle it.
11.50 a.m.

Sir, whenever we raised our objections in meetings to do with a challenge, the Brazilians and Australians said to me that they are not making any effort to harm your country and your small businesses. The European Union can accommodate you and still do what we are asking. This is the reasoning that they put forward.

Mr. President, it is under the domestic support and export competition regimes that the European Union provides the benefit to us through the preferential arrangement because they provide subsidies to their farmers and it is through those two areas that we benefit. The Australians and Brazilians say that it is the European Union that they are after. The European Union does not produce tin sugar but they export it. The European Union said that they can accommodate us and still remove the barriers that they are speaking about but you cannot be a beggar and a chooser.

Mr. President, while that is true, I cannot go to the European Union and say to them that they can accommodate Barbados and still accommodate Australia, while Brazil and Australia are telling us that they are not doing anything to accommodate us either. The point is, in the end we are going to get squeezed when it comes to that issue.

Sir, if we think that was bad, it is worse than that. I hope that when I am finished speaking, some of those persons who were asking what I thought and what is the future of the sugar will know, why it is essential that we proceed to do the things that the Government is planning to do in collaboration with those in the industry.

The African, Caribbean and Pacific countries are currently engaged in the negotiations with the European Union or what they call economic partnership agreements. Sir, when the present LOMA arrangements come to an end, the Economic Partnership Arrangements (EPAs) are supposed to be the successor to that arrangement but there is a difference here. Whereas the existing arrangements are one way, that is, the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries have access to the European Union market without having to pay any duty, the proposal under the Economic Partnership Arrangements is that the trade will now be reciprocal. These countries will have to open up their markets in some areas that are of interest to the European Union. Sir, a lot depends on what we are able to achieve in the negotiations.

Mr. President, in any case the present sugar industry is dead and it is because of that the Government has taken the initiative to do a number of things to restructure the industry.

Sir, I am pleased to say that the response from the farming community, so far, has been good because they have money invested in the industry and naturally they are interested in making a decent return on their investment.

Mr. President, among the proposals which we have put forward, coming out of a number of meetings which were held with the tripartite committee and other agencies and the development of a business plan for the restructuring of the industry, are the production of particular varieties to be used for producing electricity; the use of the wax from the outer layer of the cane for the development of a number of products in the area of pharmaceuticals; the use of a portion of the juice which is extracted from the cane to develop a certain amount of ethanol, which can be used as one of the components of gasoline for vehicles; the use of some of the juice to go straight into the manufacturing of rum instead of going through the process of making molasses and so on; the use of the compost to make animal feed and a range of products that we have identified as possibilities.

Mr. President, last week I was in Trinidad and Tobago attending a meeting with COTED, Council of Trade and Economic Development, which dealt with agricultural issues, and I took the opportunity to speak with a number of funding

agencies about the possibility of securing funds from them to conduct some of the feasibility studies that are necessary because it is not Government's intention to ultimately get involved in these activities but to do the developmental work and provide the information to the private sector as we did in the case of cotton, of which I will speak shortly and show them the potential and let them take it on. We are working on a number of those studies.

Sir, I would say that the most advanced of those proposals is the one to do with fuel cane. It is advanced in the sense that we have done all the trials and it is now established that there are particular varieties that can be used. During the last harvesting period we harvested some of the varieties that were planted at Golden Ridge, Warleigh and Groves. We did that deliberately because we wanted to see how they would respond to different soils and conditions. They were harvested in the usual way, by the normal harvester. So we have established that the existing equipment is capable of handling those varieties and they were sent to the factory in the usual way and passed through the mill with all the other cane. Sir, we have established that those varieties are capable of doing a number of things.

Mr. President, among those things which they can do that are of critical importance to the industries are: (1) We have been able to verify that we can produce up to 60 tonnes of biomass per acre compared with 20 tonnes from the existing and normal sugar cane varieties, that is a tremendous change there. (2) They retool up to seven years without any difficulty, compared with three years for the normal varieties. (3) Contrary to what was an initial belief, the sucrose content, though slightly lower than the normal variety, is not that far below.

Sir, originally it was thought that because of the high fibre content that they might not have been much sugar in this variety but that has turned out not to be true, so that is another plus. Mr. President, here we are talking about varieties that can produce the biomass. They can produce quality juice as well. They can produce sugar, if we need to do that. They can produce molasses, if that is necessary. Therefore, even from those varieties, we are talking about a number of possibilities which make it very attractive.
12.00 noon

Sir, we have been having discussions with the electric company. I met with a number of the senior officials recently and they are continuing those discussions. We are confident at the moment that those varieties, because of all the other things that I have mentioned, can be used to produce electricity at a competitive price to the existing sources of energy.

There is another aspect. We are speaking about a renewable source of energy. If this becomes a reality, we are speaking here about producing a product that we do not have to bother about competition from Brazil or Australia or Thailand because it is being used within our local environment. Therefore, we do not have to export it, provided that we can achieve what we have said, in relation to a competitive price. There is a guaranteed market for the producers.

In my discussions with the farmers, they are keen on it, in fact, they wish that we could start immediately because at last, they see the prospect of getting a reasonable return on their money. They have not had that for a long time because, even with the price support which the Government has continued to provide to the industry to show those who were involved in the industry the commitment from the Government, the Government has only been able to bring them to a point where they can more or less break even. The gap is too big between what they receive from the EU and the cost. Therefore, any opportunity that would give them a profit is one, I am sure, they will be glad to take, so they are very keen.

As I said, there are other proposals for the industry generally, fuel cane is just one. We had discussions with a gentleman by the name of Mr. Tilby. I am sure that Senator Chandler will remember the Trilby equipment that was at Uplands years ago. I have not seen it but they tell me that two of the houses which were made from one of the components of the sugar cane still exists. They also tell me that the termites have never attacked them.

This is one of the proposals in terms of the ability to make board from the pith, whether or not it is feasible, I do not know. We have had discussions with Mr. Tilby about the installation of a trial plant, which will be able to grind 20 tonnes per hour. It is our hope and expectation that it will be in operation in 2005, not during the crop season because we have lost a bit of time, but in my discussions with the gentleman a few months ago, we agreed that if we were not able to get it in place in time for the Crop, we would leave back an amount of cane which will still make it possible to try the technology.

The only record of its operation so far is the one at Uplands. It was tried in Jamaica subsequent to the case at Uplands but it was abandoned, so there is no record of it having been tried over a sustained period. We think we should try it first before we encourage people to put money on it, so the Government is undertaking that cost. We believe that all of this work is developmental and the Government should carry the expenses, as soon as all the information is available, then ask the private sector to get involved.

Therefore, efforts by the Government are directed towards transforming what is now a sugar industry where

you manufacture sugar and export it in its raw form, into a sugar cane industry where you use all the components of the cane to make value added products. Unfortunately, I cannot speak yet in too much detail about the use of the wax for the simple reason that, although we had a lot of work done by a Barbadian who is a professor at Michigan University, Professor Hollingsworth, and he has given us good feedback, we are speaking here about the possibility of deriving intellectual property rights, so we should not declare our hand too early. We have done the work. The material is from us and he did the research.

What we are proposing to do very shortly is to send a team to Michigan University to talk with them about a Memorandum of Understanding, who is going to do what as we move forward and how any rights that we are able to get and income that flow from those rights will be distributed. We are at that stage now. As soon as that is done, then we will be able to speak in great detail about it, because by then, we would have registered our rights. If we speak too soon, we may lose them. Somebody else would run and do it before us.

The point is that even the white substance that comes off the outer layer of the cane when you peel it, I certainly as a boy sucked a lot of cane because I lived in the midst of sugar factories and sugar fields, I still do, but I never knew that it had value. I thought it was a nuisance because I had to rub it from off my face, but we now discover that it has good substance, and we intend to make use of it.

Sir, as I said, we are now talking about a sugar cane industry where we seek to use all the components of the cane, even the cane top. Yes, we have put it to use before in the sense that we used it for mulching but that is now part of the biomass about which we speak, so we do not intend to leave out anything.

Sir, the BAMC is the agency that we have chosen to follow through on the work of these projects. They have set up a project team, separate and distinct from anything to do with the management of the factories and the fields. The money we are talking about here has nothing to do with that, it is for the out-of-crop operations of the BAMC. They have to maintain the factories, and get them in shape for the next crop. They have to do a number of things in the fields such as planting, pesticides and those things.

Those projects about which I speak are separate and distinct and they are being provided with funds for that work. It has nothing to do with this because we do not feel that development work should be mixed up with this. The BAMC just happens to be the agency involved in sugar production and we have asked them to set up a separate team to deal with those, because of their closeness with the issue, so they are taking care of that matter.

In addition to growing sugar, the BAMC also grows root crops and vegetables. I must tell you those have always been profitable, as is the case with other plantations. The BAMC is presently the largest producer of cotton. In August, based on all the commitments which have been given by the farmers through the Cotton Growers Association with which we work closely, we hope to move from 200 acres, which we planted in the crop that was just reaped, to 800 acres as the next step.
12.10 p.m.

Sir, 500 of those 800 acres will be planted by the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation. They expect to get $2.4 million from that 500 acres.

Mr. President, in addition to being the largest producers of cotton at the moment, the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation also has equity in a private sector company, Exclusive Cottons (Caribbean) Incorporation, because we have encouraged the producers to take an interest in the company.

Mr. President, the cotton producers in Jamaica have an interest in the company as well, and when I was in Trinidad and Tobago last week, I spent a great deal of my time in speaking to representatives from the other countries in the region who have an interest in cotton, to get them to become involved in the company. Sir, the vision of the company is that it will buy all of the cotton in the region, all the producers will operate under the banner of WISICAL which has the mark for West Indies Sea Island Cotton Association Limited.

Mr. President, everyone knows that West Indian Sea Island cotton is the best in the world. It is also a product which we do not have to worry about competition from countries such as Brazil, Australia or any of those countries because those countries cannot produce West Indian Sea Island cotton. They can produce cotton but not West Indian Sea Island cotton.

Mr. President, a few years ago when a team from Israel was working with the Ministry of Agriculture, they were so fascinated with our cotton that they took some seeds back to Israel to be planted. Those seeds grew but what they produced was no where near to what is called West Indian Sea Island cotton. I have been advised by the experts, and Senator Chandler might confirm that, that it is the climate, including the soil, that makes the difference.

Mr. President, we currently supply Jamaica with seeds and recently there was a technical meeting there where we had an issue as to whether or not cotton produced in Brazil was, in fact, West Indian Sea Island cotton. The technical team looked at the length of fibres, *et cetera*. What they

detected was, even in the case of Jamaica, although it was not significant, there was a difference between the quality of our fibres and of theirs.

Mr. President, the point I am making is that it is impossible for Brazil to produce West Indian Sea Island cotton in the way we market ours, therefore, here is an opportunity of which we have to take full advantage.

Sir, that is why that company was formed. We have now decided that we will no longer sell lint to anybody. The company owns the 82 bales of lint which were put together from this year's harvest. They have been busy talking with strategic partners to get that lint turned into the final value-added products.

Sir, previously we would have sold the cotton to Japan, to the United States of America and to Brazil. In the case of Japan, they would have taken the cotton, mixed it with inferior quality cotton, and then offered it as 100 per cent West Indian Sea Island cotton, which it was not. We have decided to go the other route and, therefore, the company now owns the process right through to the end, so that the growers who have interest in that company will also reap benefits from the value-added products and, therefore, will benefit twice.

We hope that it would not be too long before we see a similar thing happening with the sugar industry where a number of those proposals about which I have spoken would be realised, and that the farmers would be busy planting, farming and reaping, not only the products but also the benefits.

Mr. President, while reacting to the fact that the Government has had to provide support to the industry, some persons have been tempted to suggest that it is a burden which Government should throw off, one that Government should put the money elsewhere in what might be termed more profitable exercises. Some persons want the industry to be scrutinised before any money is being put into it.

Mr. President, I do not know what that means, but the facts are, if we allow the industry to die, rather than to transform it into an industry from which the farmers and the country can benefit, I think we would be doing ourselves a great disservice. There are so many benefits from having a sugar cane industry, as I have just described. If we start to talk about the environment, there are benefits there too.

Sir, in the World Trade Organisation, whenever the European Union (EU) speaks about agriculture, they are very quick to talk about the multi-functional nature of agriculture and about the difference it makes to their environment from an ecological point of view. We would quarrel when driving through the countryside and see the bush but that is all one would do. That is what we want to avoid.

Mr. President, there are a number of persons who are of the view that we should throw off the industry, that we are spending too much money on it. These persons are not mindful of the fact that there are 5 200 persons directly employed, while there are others indirectly involved. I am mindful of the fact that we are talking about the restructuring of an industry which establishes linkages with other sectors of the economy. If we are able to develop that type of industry, it would not only benefit those involved in sugar but would benefit the entire country. In fact, one of the beautiful things about agriculture, as we now see it and are trying to promote it, is the creation of linkages with other sectors of the economy.

Mr. President, sometime ago when I met with the producers of anthuriums, I asked them where they were selling their anthuriums and one producer told me that he sells his products to the hotel at Heywoods. Sir, while speaking about tourism, nobody speaks about the part that anthuriums, ginger lilies, and the other flowers play in developing and in putting Barbados to the point where they can sell a tourism product of a certain quality. If those flowers are not produced by the agriculturalist, they would have to be imported, therefore, we would be losing foreign exchange.

Sir, the tourists do not want to walk into a beaten-up looking room and, therefore, when people speak to a tourism product, they do not look at the components of that product. Some people speak as though one can simply snap one's fingers and a tourism product appears. They speak without looking at the contribution made by the other sectors.

Mr. President, there is then the land industry, another potential source of revenue and another product that would enhance the tourism product, but then there are others.
12.20 p.m.

If agriculture expands, they will have to use chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers which is an input to them but an output from the retail places which sell those chemicals. It is not a simple thing to close it down because we accept that it cannot continue in its present form because it is not competitive. We can try to transform it into the type of industry where it can become profitable and continue to provide benefits to the country.

Sir, if we go back to history, in the days when I worked in the Accountant-General office there was a Welfare Development Fund and a housing development fund and the money which went into these funds came out of the sugar industry. The sugar industry made a significant contribution to the development of Barbados over the years. Those were the days when it was profitable because of the larger scale of operation and better price.

It can continue to make a significant contribution because the Ministry of Agriculture is convinced that a restructured sugar industry, a restructured cotton industry, along with the other aspects of agriculture that are improving can benefit the country significantly.

Therefore, Mr. President, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, in spite of the levity expressed by some, I consider this Debate to be a solemn occasion especially since the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Senator Griffith, pronounced the industry dead. Some months ago, we were told that the industry was on its death bed. Sir, it is a sad announcement that the sugar industry is dead. Sir, I am not sure that is what the Honourable Minister meant because I must admit that for the first time in several years...

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. I said that the industry in its present form and existing under the present and future arrangement is dead and this is why we are proposing that it be restructured.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Sir, I suppose that death is death but we will not pick over the corpse. Sir, this is the first time in many years in this country that the degree of enthusiasm, enlightenment and commitment has been brought to the agricultural sector in the whole and to the sugar industry in part. Before the sector was allowed to drift along as a piece of wood on an open ocean without any clear direction or clear destination in view. We have to agree that agriculture in general is of paramount importance to the goodwill and sustainability of any nation.

We would also have to agree that agriculture in general, specifically in the sugar industry bears a significant historical premise in the society and that as far as the sugar industry is concerned, part of the identity of the nation has been wrapped up intimately within the corridors of the sugar industry. Sir, though some of us may find it facetious, many of our origins are linked to men and women who proudly ply their trade in the fields of this great nation to ensure that the sugar industry and the agricultural sector in general stayed afloat.

Mr. President, it would be realistic to accept that all Governments who have managed this country played a role in perpetuating the goodwill of agriculture or in retarding the progress and sustainablity of it. I stand here to represent part of the legacy of the significance of agriculture in this country and the role that the sugar industry has played over the years in ensuring that the fields and hills we now call our own do exist as they are.

Mr. President, I am especially warmed by the sustained enthusiasm that the Minister of Education and Leader of Government Business in this Chamber brings to the discussion. It seems to be a celebration of new life and perhaps the message of the Honourable Minister is that there is now a level of ingenuity being invested and injected in the sector that has given us a hope that there would be a new life, not necessarily reincarnation but the springing forth of new life for this very important sector in this country.

Mr. President, I want to make the point that it does not matter how profitable tourism might be in the future, a nation must always be in a position to feed its people. If the capacity of a nation to feed its people must be driven by the inputs of external forces, then we may be feeding our people at their own detriment.

Sir, people in the medical profession are now saying that the processed foods which we eat are having detrimental impact on longevity and the sustainablity of health and we may need to look at that as we go through the course of this discussion.

Mr. President, I want to begin formally by asking the question, what is wrong with the industry? The Honourable Minister took us through an informative journey in terms of the shortfalls. I will not spend too much time talking about the history of the $60 million and its relation to the Barbados National Bank. I will not talk too much about that aspect of the Resolution but I want to ask what is the guiding vision of the industry and what went wrong.

Sir, I grew up in St. Andrew at a time when there were three sugar factories in that parish at that time the horse and cart was still popular in the transportation of sugar. I remember as a boy wondering around those premises to the disgust of those who managed those environments. One of the things that struck me and continues to arrest my attention is the fact that in those days, men and women of this nation seemed to have had a level of enthusiasm about the industry that no longer exists in this country.

12.30 p.m.

Sir, my grandfather used to be a worker in what was then called a 'Road Board'. He left for work at 4.30 a.m to reach his location and returned in the evening about 6 o'clock and went into the land. The small sugar producer in this country played a significant role in the sustainability of the industry.

Sir, in this day and age we are asking what is wrong. In this day and age the small sugar producer has become extinct and there has not been a lot of querying, writing or researching on why the lands are still there being idle. As a matter of fact, most of the lands owned by small producers are now taken up by Government because they have not been

able to pay taxes on them, because they have been out of production.

Sir, I also remember, when I was about 10 years old, that the crop season was almost like Christmas to me because that was our time to make a few dollars by tying canes in the field. The terrain of the land of the small farmers was such that you wondered why they even bothered to grow cane but there seemed to be some relationship between the sustainability of the sugar cane and the identity and the placement of those individuals within the context of their own country.

Mr. President, that has been lost and it has been lost to the hurt of many persons who, in the same communities, keep wondering what has happened to the once plush cane fields that are now overtaken by forestry. There is now a separation of the generation today with the history of the toil of their foreparents because there is now the absence of this opportunity which is so significant to what we are discussing today.

Sir, again, I must tell the Honourable Minister that I met with a few farmers in my area and they asked me to convey that they have great confidence in you.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: I am pleased to say that in spite of the fact that some may find it curious that I would express such a sentiment to you, Honourable Minister, for me, what is important is that this country's well-being is sustained.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: I do not get caught up with the fanfare. I am concerned that there are certain policy makers who have only lived in concrete villages. They have no appreciation for what happens in the outer lands of this country. They hardly ever moved out enough to observe what is changing in the agriculture sector. They are not concerned about what is happening to the sugar cane industry because for them that is not where the investment is worthy. But for me, Sir, my family still lives in the hills of St. Andrew and they still rely on the lands and try every once in a while to grow at least four tonnes of sugar cane because that is how they were able to feed their families.

Sir, that is why I feel that it is important for me to ensure that this discussion takes into account the real bread and butter issues affecting people out there, perhaps, those in the rural areas more so than those in the suburbs because it is important. Mr. President, I grew up in a village that had three factories.

Sir, something struck recently as I was contemplating this whole thing. Do you realise that the parish of St. Thomas is a parish where most of the rain falls in this country and it had some of the most productive lands for the sugar industry in this nation, for example, Content, Vaucluse, Dunscombe and Dukes plantations and the list goes on? Do you realise that most of those plantations are no longer in sugar cane production? Do you realise on those same plantations that continue to grow plush grass the inhabitants are no longer the sugar cane but cows?

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: This Debate cannot occur unless we examine the journey of the sugar industry. It cannot occur unless we understand what has gone wrong with this industry. Mr. President, as a matter of fact, I see bulldozing is occurring where the top soils of some of those plantations is being scraped off and the rock content of the composition of the land of that particular land space is being exposed and after a certain time the use of the land is being changed.

Sir, I want to hear the heckles and laughs because I remember that just before that started to happen, the canes in those fields were allowed to stay for a while longer after the crops had finished. Obviously, when cane goes beyond its natural life cycle it starts to deteriorate. I grew up hearing about first and second crops.

Mr. President, recently I heard someone in the agriculture sector say that because of the rains that we have been having that the first crop canes look almost as though they are ready to be harvested and by the time the crop comes around next year he said it is going to be a bumper crop. Sir, I love to hear that and it is wonderful for him but think about the other fields.

Sir, I passed by Fairy Valley plantation four weeks before the crop started and I wanted to know what was wrong. The Honourable Minister is seeking to convince us here today that there is now a new vision and the cost of resuscitating or causing the transition from state of death to new life is $60 million. Honourable Minister, I have no difficulty with that but show me the money in the product. Four weeks before the crop started, the piece of land near the agency that we are discussing in this Resolution, was full of lovely cane and somehow I noticed that about four weeks before the crop was due to begin bulldozers moved in and pushed down the canes. Sir, a portion of that field was literally bulldozed and the area is now nicely secured so that you cannot see what is happening there. I do not know what is happening there.

Asides.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, four weeks before the crop season began, at a time when the country was trying to ensure that it made its quota, a significant portion of the field was bulldozed. What has gone wrong? I wish to submit to this Chamber that one of the things that has gone wrong with the industry is that those involved with the industry have lost their regard for the role of the industry in the overall well being of this country. Somehow, there has been a transition of thinking where people believe that tourism is 'It'.
12.40 p.m.

Therefore, we hear with regard to the sugar industry and agriculture, that we will import what we need, while at the same time, we have an individual that can be an Honourable man who can be considered as enthusiastic convincing the Members of this Chamber that all is going to be well.

What has gone wrong? I think that people have been removed from the industry. I believe that once upon a time when the crop season was called into being, there were even some other industries that would release some of their people to go and help to harvest the canes. I remember very well that when you passed by a plantation, you would see scores of men and women in the process of harvesting the sugar cane, with a level of life and enthusiasm. There were people who got up early in the morning and went to the fields. I was one of those kids who was fascinated by the whole process of the sugar cane harvest.

Mr. President, do you realise now that people have been separated from the industry to the extent where, I believe the Minister said there are only now about 5 200 people involved in the total industry, I hope I am speaking correctly. Sir, I realise that when you pass by now, you are having on a plantation field at any one time, one machine and one man harvesting, replacing scores of men and women who had been displaced.

I heard the Honourable Minister asking what are we going to do now to move those persons to another area of agriculture or to re-equip them to be able to participate in the industry. I believe that with the emergence of cotton and so on, there is some possibility for the reallocating of those human resources within the industry, but mechanism has occurred. I remember that one time a cane truck had six or eight poles in the air, five or six men and a driver or four men and a driver. They would be hustling around to make sure they get four or five tonnes of canes in that truck and get it to the factory, because their ambition was to get as many loads as possible during the day.

I remember as an adolescent, two and three o'clock in the morning, trucks passing and blowing the horn, signaling that it is time to go. People would get up and get themselves together, to get on board and move on. They would park in the factory line for hours until the factory opened to begin their day. I had a part of that, and that is why I feel so emotionally attached to this whole debate because the death of the industry means the death of a significant portion of whom we are, and we have to find a way of making sure that it is sustained.

Therefore, we have reduced the numbers of persons involved in the industry, especially in the harvesting. Further, there was a time called the Crop Time and a time called the Hard Time. When the Crop Time was over, the Hard Time meant clearing the cane stumps. It meant dropping manure. It meant from time to time picking pond grass to make sure that the field was cleared. It meant spraying, from time to time, because all that was part of the ritual of the Hard Time. As I said, I was part of that when I was a boy, and I remember so very well that short of being able to do other things in the society, that was something that guaranteed us, as youngsters in the community, what they called, a little pick, Mr. President, I know you can appreciate that language, or a little something to do in those days.

Mr. President, there were many persons involved. The question that keeps tugging at my mind is this, if we have reduced hundreds of persons who have been involved in the industry, in terms of input cost, what has happened? We have brought in machines. The Honourable Minister made it quite clear that there are 37 machines in the country and you only need 17 or 18. Therefore, if the persons are being shifted out during the course of the year, a lot of those persons would go overseas, on what they call, the Contract, and cut canes in Florida, and other places. Then, they would come back in time to harvest the canes.

I remember so well, a man in St. Andrew by the name of the late Calvin Worrell. He was a poor man but had probably about four acres, two old Morris cane trucks, A35 and A62. I also remember how the ritual where just before the Crop Season, those vehicles were painted and inspected. Crews were recruited and when the first horn went off that signaled the Season had started, you would see a level of enthusiasm and connection that is no longer a part of the ritual of this society. Mr. Worrell has now passed on but just before he passed, he would cut canes and they would sit there for weeks, and you know the longer a cane sits on the ground after it has been harvested, the lighter it gets, so you lose the weight of the cane.

I remember that after the trucks from Lower Estate Plantation had done their work on the plantation, they would come out and pick up those canes. I saw men from my community cry, when I sit and talk with them about what has gone wrong in the society. They do not expect sugar to continue to exist as it was then, but I am saying that the level of displacement and disconnection that has occurred

because of this industry that has been drifting along, has done an injustice to those who have always been the pride and industry of this great country of ours.

Therefore, what has gone wrong is that we have removed the people from the industry. There has been an eradication of the small sugar producer, as I have said earlier, who has been cut off and, we know for a fact that those small producers added something to the whole industry, because their canes usually were of a better quality, heavier weight and, I believe, produced better sugar or more sugar because they had the benefits of the animal manure.

The small producers kept their canes much better than the plantations and they were very good at knowing when it was time to fork. In those days they could not get the Government's plough to come, so the ploughing was done by using a big steel fork to dig the cane holes. I did that also and I am proud of it. We did that too and we were part of that, because it was part of the psyche of the Nation. I remember there were graduates of Combermere and those great schools, but in the evening they could not wait to get home, drop the books and come down there to do what we were doing.

Something has gone wrong. Mr. Honourable Minister if the good God above has sent you to save the industry, my prayers are with you, and be diligent in the service. One of these days we will be on the other side together, because it is important that the Nation understands that regardless to what side on the political fence you are on, there are some issues that are so dear to the belly of this Nation that no political symbol or acronym can define the level of our intent to make sure it is preserved. I am sure that the Honourable Minister knows that because, unlike some of us, he had the opportunity of looking at the view from both sides.

Sir, what has gone wrong? Please tell me. What happened to the small producers? Mechanisation of the industry is what has happened. Some people believe, and I am sure that the Honourable Minister may be able to elucidate this point, that mechanisation in terms of the harvesting process, perhaps has resulted in some element of weakening of successive crops. Mr. President, if one goes to a cane field after it has been harvested and looks at the condition of the stumps, one would have to ask if any damage has been done sufficiently to impact on the health of the new growth. I have gone there, I am not in that field, therefore, I am seeking guidance in terms of understanding what has happened.

12.50 p.m.

Mr. President, there has been talk about how the canes should have been planted, upright versus stretched out, and the jury is still out as to which one it is. I can say this, I remember in my days being associated with planting canes. We would take a drill, drive it into the ground to a certain depth, stick the plant in and trample the soil around it, and some of the healthiest-looking plants one could have ever seen were grown. In fact, I was always instructed to make sure that there were always two joints to every cane plant, and that on each joint there should be one eye. If someone had ever gotten a double-eyed cane plant, that person was supposed to mark it because it would have meant luck.

Mr. President, it is my view that becomes an important part of assessing what has gone wrong. Have we changed our strategies relative to planting? Have we changed our strategies relative to how we harvest? If we have changed our strategy as to how we harvest, has it impacted negatively or positively on the health of the crop? Sir, we must remember that one of the concerns is that there is deterioration in sugar production.

Mr. President, what has gone wrong? Is there really a new and fundamental restructuring plan in place? If there is, would the country, particularly those who are involved in agriculture and in the sugar industry, be kept abreast of what is this restructuring plan and the intricacies that are involved? Persons must know and must participate in the re-birthing of the industry to the extent where they would become partners in its resuscitation. What has gone wrong, Mr. Honourable Minister? You have already answered some questions and there might more for you to answer. What has changed the industry?

Mr. President, the truth of the matter is that the role of the sugar industry has changed within the context of the overall economic plan of the country. Understandably so, because the shift has been from one area to another and tourism has become what some people term the 'bread basket' of the nation. I know that there are some policy makers who do not look on that kindly but I would tell you, perhaps the chief advocate of tourism would tell you, that it is the industry upon which all other systems rest in this country. But we know the potential volatility of tourism.

Mr. President, sugar is now viewed differently because the economic climate in which it operates is different, and the world stage has changed significantly where some of the protectionist barriers would be removed. Therefore, it means that when we look at the sugar industry, we now have to look at the diversification of the industry. I believe the Honourable Member has made the point that it is of critical importance.

Mr. President, not only have the economic realities changed but there has been a mass removal of lands out of agriculture. Let me go back to a point I was making earlier and I believe it was said already in this Honourable Chamber that there are some persons who do not see the economic value of investing in the sugar industry, some of

whom are owners of plantations. When speaking of owners of plantations, we need to know who own the plantations because there are some new plantation owners who might frighten some of us and who are removing the land.

Sir, agriculture is agriculture. If one is raising cows on a plantation, is that not agriculture? Would the purpose not be served although the land might be more suitable for producing sugar?

Mr. President, I say to you that as one travels through St. Thomas and parts of St. Andrew, one would find some of the most picturesque lands were removed from sugar cane production, on which one would now find, I think, a healthy abundance of cattle.

Sir, last Sunday I was driving through the area of Farmers, which is one of those plantations that has a healthy significance to Barbados. There is a re-sited neighbourhood in that area. There are two fields of canes which, having been harvested, have been sitting there for two years. What I have noticed is that the cow pasture seems to be expanding.

Sir, I remember the days when those fields would have produced some of the most fantastic canes. I remember when there was a type of cane called the 119, the 161, the 'brown skin girl', which has become extinct as far as I know, because nobody has seen it fit to move to protect that species of sugar cane. I remember when people would go to sugar factories and would search the trucks to find a piece of the 'brown skin girl' because it was said to be soft and succulent. Nobody could have eaten the 119 because it had a reddish heart.

I also remember that Farmer's Plantation was noted for growing the 161 long-jointed white cane. As a matter of fact, as one cuts those canes and throws them at the side, ordinarily when it would have taken two bunches of canes to fill up the truck bed, it would have only taken one bunch of 161 because they were long.

Mr. President, I want to know what is the future of those plantations. I have seen canes sitting there curiously and now the land is becoming rab land because trees are growing up, and it is obvious that canes and the growth of canes on those fields, is dead.

Mr. President, I am talking about the removal of land from agriculture and that if, indeed, we are serious about the resuscitation of the industry, I think these questions need to be answered. I believe that part of the land use policy in this country has to include a moratorium on the removal of agricultural land from out of its purpose.

Sir, sooner or later, as one flies over Barbados and looks over the valleys, one is not going to see any canes, which, I do not believe, is the direction in which we must go, especially if we are now restructuring the sugar industry to mean a sugar cane industry. Sir, something has to be done.

Mr. President, do you know that Government is removing the lands out of sugar cane to build dirt tracks? Sir, this is a waste of time. I know motor sports is becoming popular in Barbados but I would want some place where yams, potatoes, cassavas, *et cetera*, can grow. I cannot eat anybody's tyres! If one goes across Vaucluse, one would see it. I am saying that these are lands perched in locations where, if given a chance to produce what they could, would have a fantastic chance of being part of the basket of agricultural lands that produce sugar in this country.

Sir, whoever wants to buy land and create racing tracks, if they have the means so to do, that is good, but a policy must be put in place that protects some of the best agricultural lands in this country from those persons whom I call land pirates. Sir, at the end of the day, this country must be fed and the people of this country must feel confident that if something happens on the world stage that Barbados has the wherewithal to feed its own people and in so doing we can reduce the food import bill which is now exorbitant.
1.00 p.m.

Sir, the environment in which sugar finds itself has become competitive and less protected and we are operating within that domain. I have asked the question what has gone wrong and what has changed in the industry. I now ask the question, what do we need to do and where do we need to go?

Sir, I am a realist and any Barbadian, regardless of where he or she sits politically or otherwise, who demonstrates a commitment to the agricultural industry, as has been demonstrated by the Honourable Minister, should be recognised for it. Sir, for all practical purposes, let us say that the agricultural industry is on a new path and moving along well.

Sir, where do go from here? We must protect the sector and put a moratorium on the removal of land from agriculture in general not only land for sugar production.

I believe the land is the larder of every Barbadian and in cases where Barbadians cannot afford to own it but it is owned in mass by other entities that they should have some responsibility to ensure that average citizens of this country get a fair deal in terms of what the land produces. Sir, I do not see a lot of planting anymore. We planted peas, cassava and so on and every ground had a hedgerow and on every hedgerow there was poison cassava which took care of those who went to steal the cassava because it was not pleasant to

the mouth. Mr. President, I remember those days and look on them with affection because that was the time when people felt connected to the land and what it offered.

Sir, a diversification strategy needs to be put in place. The Honourable Member spoke about how you diversify not only the industry but the agricultural sector in general. Sir, when I talk about diversification, I do not speak only about the by-products of sugar. It was laughable to hear someone say that in Barbados we do not need to grow a lot of sugar because there are too many diabetics but, Sir, this is a simplistic kind of thinking because the world over needs sugar products and the diversification of agriculture is important. Sir, it speaks about more land for use in the Land for the Landless programme. Sir, people in my constituency in Christ Church are hounding me for land. The Honourable Minister has been faithful in attending to some of the issues of the farmers in that area and for that we thank him but a lot still needs to be done.

There is a transition process at the airport where houses are being moved from one area to another and I want to know what is going to be done with those lands. If the lands are going to be made available for small farming then I would like to know that the farmers in Christ Church East get some of that land. The Honourable Minister knows that I will be forthwith in presenting my list of persons to be considered for those lands.

Sir, we need greater crop options because, at the moment, farmers in the area are mass producing the same produce because they are not up to speed with what other farmers are doing. For example, there is a lot of butternut squash and too many tomatoes and we need to have a strategy where the same agency helps small farmers with programmes where they can share in agriculture.

I have made this point in this Honourable Chamber before and I will make it again that we have a lot of small farmers who will benefit from providing produce to the School Meals Service. Sir, as we think across the strategy and decide to create more opportunities for small farmers they will become part of the supply for the School Meals Service.

Mr. President, when we talk about diversification of agriculture a focus on small farming, animal farming and poultry farming is important because these are areas that can provide a viable livelihood for persons that may not be able to produce in mass but one hundred chickens every six months, sell fifty to the local consumers in the area and get the other fifty in A-One Supermarket or another supermarket.

Sir, a gentleman told me he listened to the Debate in Parliament yesterday and reminded me that most persons who became well-to-do in the society were able to do so by raising pigs because in those days the pigs could be slaughtered at home. In addition to that, the speculator would go to a person's house, buy the pig for a specific amount but would say that the head and guts of the pig were not included in the price even though pudding and souse could be made with them.

Sir, there are persons, who if given the opportunity and assistance in getting a few pigs could make a comfortable living for themselves and family. Sir, diversification means creating more opportunities, options and the infrastructure so that these persons will be able to make well of their efforts. I think that we as policy makers need to ensure that we create the full utilisation of our domestic agro products.

1.10 p.m.

Mr. President, a few days ago I saw a young man harvesting cucumbers, 10 bags, and I asked him if he already had the market for them. He said, "Mr. Lowe, I am only going to get rid of five bags but I will have to hope for the other five."

Sir, can you imagine a small farmer injecting input into growing produce and at the end of the day has no help whatsoever in the disposal of that produce? I believe that we need to do more in terms of enabling the farmers.

Mr. President, advance a full-scale analysis of the agro products being imported. We need to know what this country is spending on the importation of certain things, for example, broccoli and limes. I am amazed at the amount of limes that are imported into this country and half of them do not have any juice in them. You have to put them under your feet and roll them in order to get juice.

Sir, I also remember that many years ago there was a very vibrant programme in the area of fruits at the Soil Conservation in St. Andrew. There were fields of cherries, some of which still exist. There was also a field of peanuts for testing and I had the opportunity of testing the nuts to see if they were ready to eat before they got the opportunity to do so.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR Dr. D.S. LOWE: I remember at that time people looked forward to participating in those programmes. Sir, even the local schools bought the grafted fruit trees and planted them.

Sir, I remember a time in Barbados when the hot pepper was a commodity which was found on almost every school agricultural programme and nowadays there is a

shortage of hot peppers in Barbados. I believe that there is something happening in that domain and certainly the Honourable Minister can inform us as to where that is going.

Mr. President, we are talking about finding out what the country is importing, but that is only part 1 of the analysis. Sir, part 2 of the analysis is to tell us how much money you are spending on those imports and part 3 would be to tell us why they cannot be grown in Barbados. Can we not grow broccoli and limes? We are even importing tomatoes? Sir, something is wrong with the vision.

Sir, can we not do that kind of analysis and as a part of the going forward of the revival of the sector, can we not put information in place to say to local farmers, this is not what we are growing, this is how it can be grown and this is what we are planning on doing in providing technical assistance to assist with the process and I think that is fair?

Sir, one, it will reduce the import cost, two, reduce the risk involved, because we do not know how those people are growing their produce and three, give the local farmers another option to grow a commodity that can readily find its place in the domestic market. That is what we are doing and we must advance that full-scale analysis. We must ask why we are not growing these products. We must ask what are the risks involved and if there are risks involved, if some experimentation can be done to see where the best locations are for growing these products.

Mr. President, we must also focus on these enabling programmes, and I have mentioned this in this Honourable Chamber before, because I think that small farmers need protection and adequate water supply. I know that there are some small farmers in Christ Church East who run the risk of having their water cut off because the water bill for input into their agricultural activity is very high and some of them owe approximately $5,000.00 and the Barbados Water Authority has a new mandate that you either pay your bill or be disconnected.

Sir, what would happen if farmers water supply is disconnected in the midst of growing their products? That is an issue and at the same time in the same location, there are over eight wells. I know that the Honourable Minister is aware that these wells are there and something needs to be done to put a nationwide irrigation programme in place to assist these persons because there are no concessionary rates for using domestic water in small farming and I believe that there should be. Mr. President, if you are in a business where you are assisting the nation in feeding its own people, then there should be some concessions given to small farmers on the rates of domestic water if they have to use it, particularly in the absence of irrigation systems that would supply the water.

Sir, I know that there are small farmers in this country today who have been victimised by an environmental hazard for many years and no resolution has come to that matter. I am calling on the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, who I know is diligent in his undertakings, to, please, assist them in getting compensation for losses they have incurred as a result of this environmental circumstance. I will not deal with this in more detail but I believe that it is important.

I also believe that there must be crop loss insurance. A good gentleman, Edward Maloney, invested a great deal of money in planting onions. Ordinarily, he produces some of the best onions in Barbados but some unseasonal rain came and just as they started to sprout, all of them were wiped out. Sir, he came to me and said, "Doc, do you know that there is nothing on the books to help me." He is a man who does not have a great supply of money. He bought cans of onion plants, planted them, paid labour and then all of that was wiped out. Honourable Minister, please, look at the issue of crop loss insurance for those small farmers who need that kind of assistance. Please, make it easier for them to commit themselves for life to the agriculture sector in this country. It is of vital importance.

Sir, I see familiar movements, so let me close.

Mr. President, technical assistance is also of importance – technical assistance as it relates to crop diversification, marketing and sales and crop protection strategies. Sir, as I close my contribution to this Debate, the queries of the $60 million and its connect to a different institution is substantive and I believe that it was explored to some great detail.

Sir, my concern in this presentation has been, what do we tell the small farmer or the plantation owner in his or her language about the future of the industry and the sector? I believe that I have raised questions because I know that the Honourable Minister will be diligent in looking at any query asked and will provide us with the information that would enlighten this Chamber but, perhaps, more important, that would enlighten every Barbadian out there listening to this debate.

Mr. President, I am very much obliged to you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.30 p.m. today.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.30 p.m. today was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

1.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The Senate is resumed.

SENATOR Dr. F. L. CHANDLER: Madam Deputy President, we have heard two very passionate presentations this morning. I also feel very passionate about agriculture and the sugar cane in particular, since I was associated with the industry from birth.

I fully support the Resolution to raise funds via a bond issue for financing the sugar industry. However, I find the reference to the sugar industry, rather than the sugar cane industry somewhat inappropriate and rather disturbing. I was under the impression that it had long since been accepted that we could no longer pursue simply sugar production, but needed to utilise the entire sugar cane plant to produce value added products.

The Honourable Minister mentioned a number of these products this morning, such as wax and other products produced from the juice and the pith of the cane. This is why the wording concerns me and I trust that the funds being raised will not be used simply to fund business as usual at the BAMC. In my opinion, that would be like putting money down a black hole. We must get the word sugar out of our psyche and replace it with sugar cane.

It also appears that this bond issue is being floated somewhat late, since it is intended to finance the 2003 to 2005 out-of-crop expenses. One must ask the question, why in spite of the fact that this matter was apparently being pursued since the year 2002, it has only now come to fruition?

While on the subject of delays, I must ask the question why the present cane harvest did not start until March. We have the usual wage negotiations which I think were concluded about February. I have never been able to understand why a time limit for the conclusion of these negotiations has never been set, even if it needed legislation to do so, since inevitably, they lead to delays in the start of the crop.

However, this year, after the conclusion of these wage negotiations, there was a further delay because maintenance on the factories had not been completed. In my opinion there can be no-good excuse for this. If the work was carried out in a disciplined manner and workers were productive, I am sure that it could easily be completed in time. The results of a late start are more evident than ever this year, where additionally, we had unseasonable rains which inhibited harvesting. Of course, this late harvesting and unseasonable rains have implications not only for this crop but also for the next crop.

Senator Lowe mentioned that mechanical harvesting may be damaging the sugar cane plants. As far as I know, research has proven that the compaction caused by mechanical harvesting under normal conditions does not cause any damage or reduction in the yield. When we attempt to take harvesters into the field, under the conditions that we have just experienced in May, then I would think that damage would be done.

I would like to digress a little from sugar cane at this point to answer another question to which Senator Lowe referred, that is, why he did not see pigeon peas, cassava and other crop. We know that pigeon peas were traditionally grown around the borders of sugar cane fields but with the onset of mechanisation, this was not practical. I just wanted to let Senator Lowe know that we grow acres of pigeon peas now, rather than just around the borders of fields. I am proud to say that I was involved in the research that introduced a dwarf pigeon pea plant. Now, hawkers and other people come into the fields and actually pick the pigeon peas themselves. We do not need ladders now to climb the pigeon pea trees to pick them, we actually need to bend over to pick the pigeon peas, so we are growing acres of pigeon peas at this time, and the West Indies Sugar Cane Breeding Station actually produces the seeds for the island.

Sir, the canes being cut now at this late stage will have a much shorter growing period and therefore we would expect yields to decrease next year. Everybody is saying that the cane plants look very beautiful and vigorous because of the rains. If they are not cut at the proper time next year promptly at the beginning of the season if the crop starts on time, or if it does not start on time, then these canes are likely to rot because they are so advanced.

I trust that all concerned will realise the importance of an early start to the crop season. If the conclusions of a recent climate change conference are accurate, this weather pattern is likely to continue. When I was a child, I lived next to a sugar factory and the Crop started in January. Why is this not possible now?

Madam Deputy President, I served on the Board of the BAMC for about five years and have also been involved with the company in a Melon Project, where I was the technical co-ordinator. This was in the 1990s, when we were exporting melons to England. I always felt that although BAMC has done some good for the sugar cane industry, it could do better, if there were not so many layers of bureaucracy.

Agriculture is an industry which deals with live organisms and, therefore, quick response is necessary. I remember with the Melon Project when we had a pest problem, the bureaucracy we had to go through in order to

get chemicals, by the time we got the chemical, the problem was so advanced that the chemical was useless.

I also think that independent growers should have been able to look to BAMC for an example in the best methods of sugar cane production, including cost reduction measures and improvements in productivity. As far as I can understand, except for the variety testing station which is very well managed, bulk application of fertiliser and a degree of strip tillage, there have been few lessons to be learnt.

I have to say though that with few exceptions, the independent farmers have also shown very little enthusiasm towards trying to reduce cost and increase productivity. I trust that any further Government assistance will be tied to implementing measures to increase productivity and reduce cost.

There have been numerous studies on the sugar industry over the past 15 or more years, and that is what they remain, studies, with no firm decisions made, except the one to close Bulkeley Factory and retain Andrews Factory which, as far as I can make out from speaking to those who have considerable experience in this area, was a mistake.

In spite of having a Sugar Task Force, and Sugar Desk and a Tripartite Committee for some years, no real progressive decisions were made. I was therefore heartened in 2002, when I was invited to a strategic canning retreat for the industry, out of which came a decision that we should not be looking at the production of raw sugar, but should be exploiting the entire sugar cane plant. Also, that a Sugar Cane Centre should be set up at Bulkeley, which had all the necessary attributes for this. It has a good road system, a good water supply, and it is in the sugar cane belt. This was followed by what I considered to be an excellent business plan which, among other things, called for the setting up of a Coal Generation Plant, to produce electricity from sugar cane and for a Cane Separation Plant, to produce the high-value products, to which the Honourable Minister alluded.
2.40 p.m.

Madam Deputy President, I have waited with baited breath for its implementation. I have to say that I have been fairly disappointed with the very slow progress which is being made. I know that some progress has been made with the coal generation plans since fibre cane production is happening and talks are ongoing with the Barbados Light and Power Company (BL&P), but what has happened to the plans for the Cane Separation Plant and the production of value-added products?

Madam Deputy President, the Honourable Minister mentioned the pilot plan which is going to be established by the year 2005, I have not heard any mention of this for sometime now and I wonder whether or not we could achieve this plan by the year 2005 because of the fact that project seemed to have gone somewhat dormant.

Madam, another thing that concerns me is that the approach appears to be fragmented and that there seems to be no real leader of the overall new thrust, who has the power to make decisions quickly.

I am glad that the Honourable Member has said that the new thrust would be handled separately from the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation, since if the new thrust becomes entangled in the bureaucracy of the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation, I am afraid that it cannot progress as quickly and as necessary and might not be at all successful.

With respect to coal generation, I remember attending a conference a few years ago where this concept was put forward, where a visit had been made to Guadeloupe to see the Coal Generation Plant there. At that time, there were talks being conducted with the Barbados Light and Power Company (BL&P), since they had a deadline to set up additional generating capacity by the year 2004. Madam, the powers that be 'dillied' and 'dallied' and that deadline was not met by the sugar industry.

Madam Deputy President, we cannot simply set up a Coal Generation Plant when we get around to it. If we are going to use fibre canes to produce electricity, we have to take forward the plans for a Coal Generation Plant in a timely manner so that the Barbados Light and Power Company (BL&P) deadline could be met.

The next deadline for expansion in power generation by the Barbados Light and Power Company (BL&P) will be in 2008. The question is, will the industry and Government come to a decision and carry out the necessary functions to meet this deadline?

Madam Deputy President, last week at the Sugar Technologist Conference held here, it was interesting to hear Mauritius state that they were currently producing 43 per cent of their energy requirements from coal generation and also producing a huge quantity of ethanol for blending with gasoline. Madam, Guyana and Dominica reported that they were moving ahead in the direction of ethanol production.

Madam Deputy President, as far as I know, the Honourable Prime Minister has mandated that Barbados should be 40 per cent self-sufficient in energy from renewable resources by the year 2010. If we continue at the present pace, this would be a virtual impossibility.

Madam Deputy President, at the recently concluded Sugar Technologist Conference, the need for prompt action was stressed and, in fact, the general consensus was that if

we in the Caribbean did not act now, we might as well close our sugar cane industry, but I think for a number of years, I have been hearing that remark.

Madam Deputy President, the matter of coal generation brings two points to mind, first that Bulkeley's Sugar Factory is definitely a better location for this, from the power company's standpoint, and that the power company needs a firm assurance that it will continue to have a supply of sugar cane for the next 30 years or so. The question is, could this assurance be given if we do not have a land use policy that would ensure that lands stay in agriculture?

Madam Deputy President, I agree with the remarks made by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in the past that there has to be a balance, but I maintain that there is enough land already out of agriculture to meet all of our needs for housing, *et cetera*, which are lying idle.

It should be noted that during the 1960s, there were over 60 000 acres in sugar cane, compared with only 27 000 acres today. Therefore, in my opinion, no more square footage of land should be allowed to come out of agriculture. In the 1970's, I think it was Mr. Graham Gooding, a well known agriculturist, who had conducted an Idle Lands Survey. There needs to be another study to identify these idle lands. I am sure that the results would be astounding.

Madam Deputy President, I have said before and will repeat that I admire the Honourable Minister of Agriculture's enthusiasm about the future of agriculture. It is really refreshing but the Honourable Member cannot do it alone. Therefore, if what a former Honourable Minister of Agriculture is saying, which was quoted in the media, that there is little control over the officers in the Public Service, these are the people who are responsible for taking projects forward, after policies have been decided. Madam, my personal experience has led me to believe that with a few exceptions, herein lies the problem.

Madam Deputy President, what bothers me is that we, as Barbadian taxpayers, seem willing to sit and accept this lack of urgency that is shown by these officers. In my opinion, the problem is lack of accountability and the security of tenure is too great. These officers drag their feet without any consequences to themselves but dire consequences to the country.

I have always maintained that if the Civil Service were to operate on contract like how many companies operate, productivity would be greater. I have worked for most of my life on contracts. I have heard some mention of the lack of funds to carry forward the new thrust in the industry. If this is a concern, I wonder what happened to the suggestion made very early in the discussion, which is that the European Union (EU) should be approached. They have given assistance to the rum industry and may, therefore, do the same for the development in the sugar cane industry.

Madam Deputy President, in conclusion, let me summarise the points that were made, which I think are crucial to the survival and advancement of the industry:

1. We must concentrate on sugar cane rather than on sugar;

2. The start of the crop must not be delayed either by wages negotiations or by the maintenance of factories;

3. There should not be business as usual at the Barbados Agricultural and Marketing Corporation;

4. Prompt decisions which are not impeded by bureaucracy must be made to achieve the transition to the new industry's position;

5. There should be a cohesive approach to the planned innovation to the industry, and a leader who has the power to make decisions in a timely manner identified;

6. The siting of the sugar cane centre must be based on such attributes as road system, water availability and suitability for the Coal Generation Plant, and from all accounts, the most suitable site appears to be Bulkeley Sugar Factory;

7. There should be some urgency about seeking funds for implementation of the plans.

The Honourable Minister has made mention and I am glad to hear that while in Trinidad and Tobago, he was approaching funding agencies. I trust that the private sector would step up to the plate and put their money where their mouths would be.

8. A land use policy should be implemented promptly and an Idle Lands Survey be conducted.

Madam Deputy President, as I before said, I support the Resolution but I am very concerned that if we do not act with urgency, this important bond issue would be to no avail. I thank you.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Madam Deputy President, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this Debate on Government's guarantee of the bond to support an out-of-season activity and operation of the sugar industry. Recently, we in Barbados have been treated to what I consider to be the grandest overstatement, which is that the Barbados economy is a one-legged economy. I believe we must treat to that statement with a sense of dismissiveness, for the simple reason that a sombre reflection of the economy of Barbados from time immemorial has shown that we have always had one strong sector taking the lead and that our incorporation into the trans-Atlantic economies of the world from back in the 15th and the 17th Centuries, has shown that we have evolved as an economy, principally as a producer of one staple raw material and our social, political and economic structures have evolved along those lines. Senator Lowe in his contribution made mention of how life in Barbados was affected when the crop season was in full bloom. Equally, if we look at the Barbadian economy today, persons who work directly with the tourism industry would tell you that there is a significant difference in terms of the level of economic activity in the height of the winter season and outside that season.

2.50 p.m.

Sir, the agricultural sector plays an important role not only in its contribution to the economy but in the other activities associated with it and we tend to measure the success of a sector by the amount of employment or foreign exchange that it generates. This Government has taken the view that the agricultural sector must continue to play a part in order to earn foreign exchange and for the protection of the social and environmental fabric of Barbados. The concept of food security, rural development and soil conservation are some of those other collateral issues on which the Government places emphasis.

Madam Deputy President, when the development plan for Barbados is published and circulated, the public would see that this Government will put in place a comprehensive plan of action for the protection of the agricultural sector in this country.

Madam Deputy President, during the Financial Statement presented to this Parliament on November 25, 2003, the Prime Minister made a statement that the sugar industry in Barbados in its present state was doomed. I believe a lot of political play on that statement might be misunderstood for the simple reason that Government was not celebrating the collapse of the sugar industry but responding to the need to restructure the industry at a time when the rules of trade in respect of agriculture have restricted the flexibility that Government could exercise at the domestic level in supporting the agricultural industry. There are a significant number of external factors which have constrained Government's ability to exercise its hand in the way it would like in the agricultural sector. We must remember that this is a developing economy and the resources of Government are not in abundance that it can give to every sector the share it would like.

We have a situation where we are operating in several international theatres of negotiation that impact heavily on the agricultural sector and how we as a society treat to this sector.

Madam Deputy President, recently the WTO has had to make a decision in relation to the subsidies that the American country has been giving to cotton farmers in that country. This has implications for how we fund the restructuring process of our own sugar industry because developing countries who lined up in Cancun to disrupt the process of negotiation because they felt they were not getting equity out of the system are now finding out that the WTO decision-making process has given a decision which can be used as a feather in their cap to launch an assault against those rich countries that do not want to liberalise their agricultural sectors.

Madam, as the Leader of Government Business said this morning we are going to be squeezed because while the liberalisation of agriculture in big countries is not happening at the pace at which we would like, those countries complaining are not giving us any preferences at all.

Madam, recently we have seen the enlarging of the European Union (EU) to the extent that a whole set of countries who engage in the production of beet sugar have now entered the EU and it must be able to determine how the products of those countries are going to pass through the traditional EU while at the same time continuing to offer preferential prices to people in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Madam, at the domestic level our agricultural sector is plagued by thin soil, scarcity of rainfall, with the problem of determining best usage for our land, high labour and capital components as compared to other countries as well as many other pressures.

The Government is committed to the restructuring of the agricultural sector. We want to diversify and expand the available agricultural products so that they can be competitive given the state of affairs at the international level.

Madam, in respect of the agricultural sector, we propose to update the legislation to make it modern, to create institutions and entities which can readily respond to the challenges of the day.

The last Honourable Senator who spoke identified from her wealth of experience a number of initiatives which Government has planned but are not being executed in a manner that would encourage us to meet the deadlines we have to meet down the road. We have to improve our infrastructure and technology and despite the impassioned pleas by Senator Lowe, we need to incorporate the technology in terms of the production because if we cannot produce efficiently, we cannot be competitive with our products.

Madam, Barbados is a society that depends upon the importation of many of our energy products. Labour is expensive and every year the sugar industry has to convince workers that they should take less because the industry cannot sustain itself if it gives into the demands of the workers whether or not those demands are legitimate.
3.00 p.m.

Madam Deputy President, the Government has also signalled its intention to protect the indigenous genetic materials that we have, in recent times, found to be useful and helpful in terms of the restructuring of the agriculture industry and the intellectual property value of those creations that have a significant value to which we must now pay attention.

We also have to build our national capacity to analyse the risk of investment in terms of investing within the agriculture sector. I am not an economist but I do not see a lot of analysis about the economics of investing in the agriculture sector being released, so that persons who might want to do so can take some of their capital and put it into some of these ventures. We seem to think about investing in the financial services sector as the only way forward.

Madam Deputy President, a lot of attention has been placed on the use of our land and I believe that a strong agro and ecological zone policy must come forward, not only from the Government but from all Barbadians across all the sectors. It is important, not only from the preservation of our soils and the aesthetic value of looking at the green Barbados but we must not put ourselves in a position where we have sectors competing for the same resource in a manner to suggest or to have Barbadians determine that we own this one as opposed to the other. I think that we have enough land in Barbados to accommodate all its sectors but we have to make a decision as to where those agro ecological zones exist.

Madam Deputy President, you are aware that I live in the parish of St. Thomas and much mention was made of that today and it would be remiss of me if I did not say to this Honourable Chamber that people in St. Thomas are seeing the developments going on around them that have nothing to do necessarily with agriculture. We need to explain to people what is happening when they open their doors and they see developments going on and bulldozing loads of top soil. We cannot just say that development must happen sometime and that, although nothing was being grown in a particular field, we are going to make it into a polo field, golf course, hotel or a housing development. We must have a non-partisan discussion in a dispassionate and honest way about how we treat the lands in this country, particularly in those zones in which there are high rainfall and deep soils and that has nothing to do with a partisan position on the issue.

The Government purports in this bond issue to finance the out-of-crop operations of the sugar industry and the financial support for the agriculture sector is a commitment that the farmers in Barbados can literally take to the bank. This Government would stand committed to financing any initiative that would develop the agriculture sector but in a way in which the diversification, the expansion of production, as well as the restructuring of the agriculture industry come to the forefront of those initiatives. Those are the ways in which we have to go forward and that is why the Honourable Minister, who led this Debate, spoke to the forensic analysis of a man who has taken his time to assess the condition of the agricultural industry and a man who understands the importance to the Barbadian economy of the agricultural sector.

I congratulate the Honourable Minister at this time for his very lucid presentation.

Madam Deputy President, the point is, the Government will finance all of these operations because we understand the importance of the industry. Madam Deputy President, you may remember that one of the first Resolutions passed in this Honourable Senate in this term was a guarantee to the Barbados Tourism Authority. I am getting back to the initial point which I made, that one of the biggest overstatements, in recent times, in politics in Barbados, was that the economy of Barbados is a one-legged economy. Sir, that is a political non-point in my view and it excites the wrong kinds of feelings in people in Barbados and that is why the Government takes great pride in bringing full support to the initiatives of the persons who work within the agriculture sector. We understand the vital importance of that sector, not only to the cash-flow of the Barbados economy but to the aesthetic and environmental reasons as well.

Madam Deputy President, when we look through the reports of the Barbados Agriculture Management Company over the last years, we recognise that there has always been a challenge in the financing of the industry in the out-of-crop season which had to be done by two means, one by running an overdraft facility or by securing bonds.

In my research I learnt that on September 30, 1993, the debt of the sugar industry to the Barbados National Bank was over $138 million in relation to the overdraft. What this Government has sought to do in relation to this bond issue was to extend the period of the out-of-crop season from July to December to July to February in order to reduce the value of the crop loan to a level which could be repaid by the export of the sugar receipts, and that is sensible because the crop rarely ever starts before February. Not only is it a true reflection of the actual out-of-crop season but it was a very sensible and mature decision on the part of the Government to extend it so that we can take advantage of the bond issue in that manner.

I am heartened by the great amount of research that has gone into determining that the sugar cane industry is a viable industry that we must pursue. The agriculturalists who have given support to the Ministry of Agriculture must be commended for their wisdom, foresight and effort in being able to present to this country a viable solution to saving an industry in its widest import so that we would not have idle lands because at the end of the day if we do not grow sugar cane, nobody has determined a national solution that everybody would agree to, what we are going to do with the land.

We are grateful for the agriculturalists who have determined that we can grow sugar cane and not only extract sugar from the canes but there are pharmaceutical products, we can use the sugar cane to produce energy, ethanol, rum, wax and other sweeteners. This Government will stand behind all of those initiatives because we recognise the value of the agriculture sector to the Barbadian economy and society.

Madam Deputy President, when we hear about the Tilby cane separation system, the animal feed processor plant and the ability to generate electricity – I understand that the plant that would separate all of these things is bound for Andrews factory. I know that there is some debate in Barbados that it should go to Bulkeley factory but there will always be some debate as to where it should go. I always say that we must not filibuster the discussion by creating problems for the solution. I think we understand the solution very well and we understand that we should move to a sugar cane industry but let us not get too bogged down in our own views and filibuster the discussion as to how the industry should go forward by spending too much time debating where it should be located.

3.10 p.m.

Madam Deputy President, Barbados is a very small country and there are hardly any parts of Barbados that are inaccessible. Some might be more accessible than others but at the end of the day, if one has done any scientific study to measure accessibility as a means to determine the best option for these separation plants, let us stop filibustering the discussion and get on with the whole process.

The project with the fuel cane to my mind is sensible. I sit in another capacity as a Director of the National Petroleum Corporation which is feverishly working to bring a cheaper energy solution to this country. We welcome the initiatives in the Ministry of Agriculture in respect to the fuel cane. I had a long conversation with the Minister of Agriculture a couple of weeks ago on this same point and what we have worked out is that one hand of Government was looking at bringing cheaper energy solutions through the fuel cane project and the National Petroleum Corporation was looking to other means.

Madam Deputy President, we have worked out a sensible way to combine both efforts to reduce the cost of energy in this country. The fuel cane, high in its calorific content is essentially one of those projects which we ought to embrace. I understand that the BAMC plans to utilise six hectares of high fibre fuel cane which could produce 10 per cent of the energy needs of this country. This is my understanding but I could be wrong. The fuel cane plant would also be able to produce 12 500 tonnes a year of sugar for local consumption and about 58 000 tonnes of molasses for the rum industry.

Madam Deputy President, there is also an alternative use for the juice of the cane and we are looking at the prospect of extracting the juice for the creation of ethanol to be used to fuel our cars as we go about our daily endeavours. We heard about the creation of wax from the sugar cane and all of these initiatives, we must embrace.

Madam Deputy President, how do we go forward is the essential point. I believe that in the same way that we see in the newspapers in recent times that the Government has been advertising national development scholarships in a number of different areas, we need to put the emphasis on the education of people in agricultural technology, as a means to help us to go forward. We must not only have people trained in other areas but, if we are serious about the survival of the agricultural sector within the context of the hostile international economic environment that exists, we must be able to school our people in the new technologies of the day.

Madam Deputy President, I close my presentation by reiterating my support for this initiative, mindful of the warnings made by the last Honourable Senator who spoke before me. I believe that the time has come for a rethinking of the way in which the agricultural sector would perform, as we seek to make this country better.

I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy President.

SENATOR Sir John Stanley GODDARD: Madam Deputy President, we are dealing with the sugar industry which has evolved since the very beginning. It was reported that the sugar cane plant was brought here in 1637 from Brazil, ten years after settlement. The industry at that time, using wind was so successful, that Schomberg in his history of Barbados recorded that there were 506 windmills in 1842.

The evolution continued and wind gave way to steam and, as has been reported here today, there were, I think, 27 factories driven by steam in the 1950's. Today, we all know there are only two left. Evolution is a more natural part of the development of agriculture than any other sector in the community.

Before I proceed, I would like to commend Senator Griffith, the Leader of Government Business for a very clear and comprehensive review of the industry and the plans for the future. I am sure that the other Senators and the public at large, would have found it extremely informative. I also want to commend Senator Lowe for the comments he made, in relation to this Resolution.

We are now at a very critical stage and decisions have to be made. I think that Senator Griffith has alluded that certain decisions have already been made. If I may refer to the Central Bank of Barbados Annual Statistics Digest, 2003, Table E.16 on page 202, all the indicators are that the sugar industry in its present form cannot survive.

If we look at the area reaped, and these figures are from 1961 up to 2002, there is a drastic decline in the hectares reaped, a drastic decline in the tonnage of canes milled, another drastic decline in the average yield of the canes per hectare and sugar per hectare, and another drastic decline in sugar produced.

In 1961 there were 163 000 tonnes of sugar produced. In 2002, 44.8 000 tonnes and, I think, the estimate for this year is 35 000 tonnes. Just for the record, Madam Chair, in 1967 Barbados produced 204 000 tonnes. Consequently to the drop in production, the export of sugar has declined drastically, and the price received has remained fairly constant since 1987.

In terms of contribution to the GDP, the percentage contribution of sugar has declined considerably. This means that we have, in my opinion, three choices. We can either continue the sugar industry on its present path which is downward, and its death is clearly predictable as has been stated here earlier today, and that is not a solution.

Secondly, we can do like Antigua and abandon the sugar industry. I certainly would not recommend that either, because Antigua has beautiful beaches but if you drive around within Antigua there is not much to excite tourists. We are so dependent on tourism, not only from the point of view of the sun, sand and sea but they want to see a beautiful well kept, well manicured countryside. We as Barbadians want to see that also.

Sir, to me, the only remaining choice is to restructure and to revitalise our sugar industry into a sugar cane industry, as was so well explained by Senator Griffith. I would not repeat the options that he has given us but there are many.
3.20 p.m.

I am sure research has already been done as to which of those options is the best. Madam Deputy President, apart from those options from an environmental and agronomic point of view, it is crucial that we maintain a sugar cane industry in this island.

Madam Deputy President, I am certainly supporting the Resolution. One point I would wish to raise, to which I would like Senator Griffith to reply, is that we are dealing with two sets of bonds, one for a period of 10 years and the other for a period of 12 years, and for the purpose of these bonds, I quote:

> "AND WHEREAS the Directors of that Company deem it necessary to borrow the sum of BDS$60 million through the issue of bonds to finance the Company's working capital requirements for the financial years 2003 to 2005."

Madam Deputy President, that excludes capital requirement. This is working capital, including cost of labour, ploughing, cleaning, maintaining the factories, *et cetera*.

This period 2003 to 2005, does it imply that the BDS$60 million would be fully utilised by 2005 and, therefore, other bonds would have to be issued to meet working capital requirement for 2005 and the subsequent years? I am unclear on that because BDS$60 million on capital requirements only, seem to be a very large amount covering a period of three years. Therefore, I would appreciate if Senator Griffith could clarify that at some point.

Madam Deputy President, I certainly support this Resolution. I think the restructuring and the revitalising of the industry, to be called a sugar cane industry, is overdue but better late than never.

Madam Deputy President, when Senator Griffith was speaking, I could not help noticing the National Emblem hanging on the wall, where the sugar cane is being held aloft. That is a very good point and I wish the Honourable

Minister all the very best as he strives to put new life and new energy into this industry. I thank you.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Madam Deputy President, I rise to support this Resolution which asks this Honourable Chamber to approve the guarantee of BDS$60 million for use by the Barbados Agricultural Management Company. Madam, first of all, I would like to stress that the reason for it is very simple, for without Government guaranteeing the loan, nobody would have lent to the company. Secondly, with Government guaranteeing the loan, we can get better interest rates, which are 5.75 per cent on the $20 million loan and 5.40 per cent on the $40 million portion of the loan. Therefore, Government is using its good name and the fact that it is a very good debtor, to aid the industry in this way.

Madam Deputy President, when people are saying that Government is doing nothing for the industry, the fact that Government is guaranteeing this loan is indicative that Government is putting its money where its mouth is, in more ways than one. Madam, without Government's action in this regard, there would be no sugar industry, and basically this is a form of a subsidy.

Madam Deputy President, one of the problems now bedeviling the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) negotiations is the question of the subsidisation of agriculture. We know that for years the Europeans, and I think they are still doing it, are paying their farmers a subsidy to keep their inefficient beet sugar industry going. I believe that Government has the right and the duty to determine what is best for its citizens. Therefore, if it is in our national interest to engage in this kind of activity, Government must do so.

Madam Deputy President, what do we know about the sugar industry? We can either be historical or emotional about it. We can even be hysterical about it. The fact remains that it has served us well but from the time we had the diversification of the economy in the 1950s with the creation of the Barbados Tourist Board, *et cetera*, from the time that development started in the 1950s, then agriculture, as we know it, had to change.

Madam Deputy President, the problem is that it has not changed. If anything, the change has been subtle and not in the best interest of the country. For example, let us take the sugar industry. The rum industry is a vital part of the sugar industry. The rum industry is profitable but do any of the profits from the rum industry ever go into the sugar industry? No, because that has been a "hide-off" making tons of money and the poor sugar industry is left to suffer.

Madam Deputy President, to make matters worse, the merchant sector has made sure that products such as fertilizers and other inputs, from which significant profits were made, did not become part of the sugar industry. Therefore, what we have is the growing and manufacturing parts of the industry being separated from the more lucrative merchandising aspects of the industry such as rum.

Madam Deputy President, it is no wonder that in the end, Government is left holding the bag and that is why we are where we are today. Let us not forget that it is important to note that the conditions which gave rise to a successful sugar industry are no longer tenable because it was built on cheap labour. From the time we have the services sector beginning to employ people, it would have meant that the supply of labour to the sugar industry would have eventually dried up, primarily because people were not prepared to work under those conditions for too long, especially when there were alternatives.

Madam Deputy President, it is no accident but rather as a consequence of our diversification and success, that we in the sugar industry have become an issue because during part of the 1950's, it was not an issue because people either worked or not worked in the sugar industry, but with the advent of the services and manufacturing sectors and with the increase in educational opportunities, *et cetera*, it meant that labour for the agricultural sector not only became scarce but as a consequence, became more expensive. Therefore, it would have been extremely difficult for the sugar industry to have survived in the form in which it was traditionally.

Madam Deputy President, the tragedy is that nobody neither foresaw nor undertook to drastically and radically alter the structure of the industry. In addition, the demands of a new economy, the demands of a more affluent working class, and the demands on land, all became issues because we had an increasing population.

3.30 p.m.

I always believed that part of our wealth came because we had an increasing population in the 1980's but we will debate that on another occasion.

Madam Deputy President, there is only x acres of land available so for the first time we had to look at land and its economic value *vis-a-vis* the changing economy, the changing social conditions and the fact that the emerging population after the development in the 50's and 60's started to work for money and were quite rightly demanding better conditions and hence land for housing became an issue.

Madam Deputy President, in our lifetime, we see the fringes of the sugar belt receding more and more into rural Barbados which was a natural consequence of the sort of development that was taking place. It is wrong to talk about land as though the people do not have the responsibility to

alter the use of that land. We have the right to determine how we use our land and the fact that we use our land for things other than agriculture is nothing to be frowned upon because land is there to be used for the needs of the people.

I wholeheartedly agree that in order to maintain the integrity of the agricultural sector we have to ensure that the best lands remain for agriculture and in sufficient quantities so that we can meet economic and social goals. It is wrong to believe that land cannot be used for anything other than agriculture. If the needs of the society require that you take 200 acres of land and put it in a golf course because it would bring greater returns we have to balance it with the fact that we have to create conditions for a better life for the people but at the same time we have to ensure that we can feed ourselves.

Madam Deputy President, if we look at the amount of idle lands we have, we would see that we have no land problem. The point I want to make is that land must be used to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people. We talk about high-rise living but, personally, I do not like it because it was not part of the way I was socialised. The average Barbadian likes to know that he has a few square feet of land to plant pea trees and that cannot be taken away from the people, Madam, it is a question of balance.

Madam Deputy President, we would not be where we are today as a nation in terms of our social and economic progress if we had not made a conscious decision in the 50's, 60's and 70's to alter the use of some of our land resources.

Madam Deputy President, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Madam Deputy President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended for five minutes.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to and Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.
3.35 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: This Senate is resumed. Senator Barker.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Madam Deputy President, a land use policy, therefore, should focus on the fact that we as a nation need to be able to feed ourselves. We must have enough land for agriculture because it is almost a national imperative that we can look after our own needs but at the same time we recognise that there are other activities which require the use of our resources.

Sandy Lane was not always a hotel it was a sugar factory but the question is, have we made a better use of the lands at Sandy Lane by having a golf course and a hotel there? Are not the gains to the country greater with its present use than with its former use? We have to ask these questions rationally and sensibly and seek the relevant answers. We have to make these decisions with regard to our land use policy and at the same time recognise the fact that we need to feed ourselves and that must be the key to our land use policy, not to slavishly say that land was in agriculture, therefore, it must remain in agriculture. It is about allocating resources – and land is a resource – to the best social and economic use for the country as a whole.

Madam Deputy President, this Government must be commended for seeking to put agriculture activity on the front burner. I think that the Honourable Minister is doing an excellent job in this regard and even his would-be detractor on the Other Side had to concede that point and there is new life and new thinking.

The transformation of what was basically the sugar industry to the sugar cane industry is an important aspect of the whole operation. The sugar cane is suitable to Barbados for a lot of reasons. It can withstand the drought conditions between January and May and it can keep the soil together because other activities would impact negatively on the soil. Our soil is very thin and susceptible to slippage, runoffs and so on. Sugar cane is a crop which lends itself to the type of terrain that we have here in Barbados but this does not mean that this is the only crop that can do it.

I believe that we are technologically advanced, so that we can take any crop and use the correct methods and methodologies and the correct economic practices in order to mitigate the potential effects of land slippage and land degradation. I believe that we have the ability even if it means going back to the old time way.

Asides.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Many years ago every parcel of land had a hedge row and you planted, Khus Khus grass, guinea grass or elephant grass. We may have to go back to some of these practices in order to maintain the integrity of our soils. It does not mean that the only crop that can do that is sugar cane. Sugar cane may be able to do it better than other crops but it is a question of using scientific knowledge and the best practices in order to achieve the goal.

Madam Deputy President, that is why I have always been and will always be a fan of the cotton industry because

I believe that it has possibilities for this country. Our Sea Island cotton is among the best in the world and that is no idle boast. Madam Deputy President, that is what the experts in the textile industry have been saying for a long time. Of course, while we want to increase production we cannot plant 20,000 for the obvious reason that the force of demand and supply would drive down the price and the same problem that hurt the sugar industry would, of course, impact on the cotton industry. Madam Deputy President, that is why the Government is sensible in seeing cotton as a commodity but rather as an industry and build an industry around it.

Madam Deputy President, if you know the economics of the cotton industry, the money is not made in the growing of the cotton, the money is made in transferring it from lint to end use garments. We know that especially for cotton with a good name like sea island cotton, the profits are tremendous and there is no reason why we should not get those profits in this island. This is something that I believe in strongly with all my intellect and with all my emotion.
3.50 p.m.

Asides.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Madam Deputy President, we have an excellent product. Two mornings ago, a former Senator was on the television talking about our black belly sheep which we have ignored. The irony is that some of the same people who are now promoting it have been sending the live animals to all parts of the world.

That is a commodity that we should be exploiting. Our black belly sheep is rated among the best lamb that you can find, and we must make use of what little we have. It is an excellent product but we are not making enough use of it. The demand for it far outstrips the supply. Why we cannot take a few acres of land and devote them exclusively to the raising of black belly sheep? Again, we are not going to raise a thousand carcasses a week, but a couple hundred to satisfy local demand can make a significant impact on our food import bill.

All of these are things that we have to look at but we have been focussing on one activity in the agriculture sector too much. Everything in the agricultural sector was around sugar, but we need to broaden our horizons and minds, and see that there are other possibilities that we can use around sugar.

I still think that we can still be using a lot of the land for sugar because cotton would not take up all the land we have, neither would black belly sheep and other crops. We would still have land, and the idea of using the sugar cane for fuel for generating electricity is something that is worth pursuing. Just look at the economics of it because we know that it is technically feasible. We have to make sure the economics of it now is positive, and make the correct decisions.

In short, the new agricultural sector requires vision. It requires people taking their minds out of the mode of the 1950's and 1960's and see new vistas and new vision, and that is what this Barbados Labour Party is going to do. We have done it already in other areas of activity. We have not finished yet, Madam Deputy President, we are still on the road to making this island the best that it could be and that is our goal, and the agricultural sector, in spite of the fact that it maybe only 2 per cent of the economy, that is irrelevant, it is not the size of the sector but the importance of the sector.

I agree with a former Senator who spoke of the environmental considerations. Now, when you fly over Barbados in the airplane, especially on or before the Crop Season, there is a lovely sight to see the rows of sugar cane. I would hate to see our sugar lands looking like rab land, so the aesthetics of it alone is appealing, but we must see it for what it is worth, an integral part of our agricultural system, as opposed to the only component. Again, we must see it as an industry and not as a commodity, and that is the main point.

Madam Deputy President, I support this Resolution heartedly. I know that we are going to have to make decisions every few years about sugar. There is going to be in the foreseeable future, some element of subsidisation but, at the same time, we must ensure that our thinking is so advanced and so diverse that we see the possibilities.

Agriculture may be only 2 per cent or 3 per cent of the economy but it is a vital cog in the whole machinery. I say that with all humility and with the knowledge that a lot of us who were poor, depended on agriculture as boys and girls to help educate us, and we are not prepared to kick down the ladder on which we elevated ourselves. It has served us well, but this is the time when we have to make correct decisions and this Government is on the road to making the correct decision. You can trust this Government to be visionary and to be proactive in ensuring that the aspirations of the people are met.

I am obliged to you, Madam Deputy President.

Mr. PRESIDENT resumes the Chair.

SENATOR THE VERY REV. H. E. CRICHLOW: Mr. President, so much has been said on Agriculture that there is not much left. I have been greatly impressed with the Minister's presentation and also the response from Senator Lowe and Senator Chandler, among others. The church has always stressed the importance of land and that we have to be good stewards of it.

When we think of the millions of years that it took for the soil to form then I think we have to be more than careful to see that we preserve our land. Of course, we must have a land use policy that will include various components that were mentioned already and I think that what is being planned is exciting.

We have been talking about crop diversification for, I think, more than 40 years now. I remember as a boy I heard discussions on crop diversification. It is not easy when we have had almost 400 years of sugar but there is an understandable flight from the land among most of our people because of its association with slavery.

I think we would all agree that most parents worked hard to see that their children do not have to work in that hot broiling sun. We should be proud of all those people who have made Barbados what it is by enduring that kind of suffering, especially those who are very old at this time, and have only worked during their lives.
4.00 p.m.

Mr. President, many of them did not have the opportunity for the upliftment of the mind, for recreational activities, or to get education. Therefore, we were led out into a much wider field, therefore, we owe them quite a lot.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, the reporter seems unable to pick you up. I wonder if you might be able to get a little closer to the microphone.

SENATOR the Very Rev. H. E. CRICHLOW: Mr. President, I was saying that the flight from the land is understandable and that I think the mechanisation of the sugar industry came at the right time. When I was a boy, I would have seen 40 men forking a field, and it would have taken days to complete. Now it is only one man using a tractor but without the mechanisation of the sugar industry, sugar would not have lasted this long.

Mr. President, the fact that we have had to import labour from our Caribbean cousins to harvest the canes, shows that sugar is moving on. I think we are now trying to do a lot more with the sugar cane. I think that is a very good idea because more of our young people will be interested in the various kinds of products that can be produced from sugar cane.

Mr. President, those few words remind us about the real value of the land that has taken millions of years to form and that we have to be stewards of it. I think that as we are trained to save water, we should be trained to save the land. I am not very happy when I see hundreds of tons of soil being scraped off for housing but, of course, we have to have housing, playing fields, *et cetera*, because I think for the most part, most of our people are living long. Barbados is alive and I hope that most of the soil that is cleared for building would be put to good use so that it could produce food, as well as flowers, and that Barbados could remain the kind of beautiful garden that it is from the air.

Sir, in such a small country of 166 square miles, not one square mile of our land should be left to run to ruin. When we think of the millions of square miles of lands in other countries, all of which are in some kind of agricultural state and being productive. It all adds to the aesthetic needs of our people. We are surrounded by beautiful flowers and even the shape of our land which would have been caused by volcanic eruptions or other forms of geological activities, all go to making our little Barbados an ecological oasis.

I have been chatting with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development about praedial larceny because I know that many farmers are suffering from this. The Honourable Minister has assured me that the Ministry is doing much work in this area because it is very frustrating for people to spend so much time in growing crops, while there are others who simply come at nights with vehicles and cart these crops away. I am happy that we are beginning to find an answer to praedial larceny because we cannot be exporters of food crops if persons are going to steal the crops.

Mr. President, I am happy to support this Resolution.

HER HONOUR SENATOR Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: Mr. President, in the last stanza of a poem by Frank Collymore, our revered local poet, entitled: "Homage to Planters", he grips the reader by his description of the aesthetic appeal of the sugar cane, and I quote:

> "I do not know much about sugar canes but I salute with gratitude, the loving care which rings such beauty from the soil and o'er our lands, its patchwork flames."

Mr. President, I think it is true to say that for centuries our visitors and inhabitants of Barbados have looked at or gazed on the sugar cane with delight. This has been often adduced as one of the reasons for maintaining the industry, as was mentioned by Senators Lowe, Barker, and Dean Crichlow, with regard to its aesthetic value. Of course, there are more practical reasons for sustaining the industry and these have been mentioned and in many cases elaborated upon with the utmost competency by our Leader, and so I am not going to go over those.

Mr. President, in preparing for this debate, my thoughts turned, I supposed inevitably, to the history of sugar in Barbados. I found that the first record dates from

1655 and shows that in that year, some 6, 950 tons were manufactured. For about 170 years, the total production, although it fluctuated appreciably, has never moved far from the 10 000 mark. During a second period of 160 years, the production increased about seventeen fold but with several interruptions.
4.10 p.m.

I am sorry that Senator Barker is not here at the moment but interestingly, there was a link between population and the rapid improvement of the sugar industry especially due to the large importation of slave labour. Sir, there have been several reports and papers written about the industry. Also, at one time there was also a quarterly publication, the *Barbados Sugar Industry Review*. These papers deal mainly with sections of the industry.

Mr. President, I would like to see a comprehensive history of the sugar industry written. There is not one at the moment and I think it is very important for adults and children alike. In the early years, I also found that sugar plantations occupied 82 000 acres of the land area out of 106 000 acres. Senator Lowe asked what caused the decline and I smiled because he hoped that no one would give an answer but I am going to remind him of the reason. I discovered that there was some subdivision in the nineteenth century in places like the Pine and Belleville. Generally speaking, subdivision started in 1968 with the policy of permitting plantations to be subdivided but in 1977 under a Barbados Labour Party, the subdivision was halted and the decline in sugar production was temporarily arrested.

Sir, between 1986 and 1992 things went haywire to the extent that landowners in the sugar industry were advised to apply for subdivision as so many of their counterparts were doing and gaining permission to subdivide. However it was misinterpreted and the psychological impact of a speech never wanting to see a cane blade must have had some effect on the minds of the population. Sir, it is a fact that evolution plays a part and our educational system has now embraced all students to secondary level.

Mr. President, our leader referred to a recent West Indies sugar cane technologists' conference that was held. I have been told that the biggest eyeopener was what Mauritius had done. Mauritius is four times the size of Barbados, has four times the population and produces twenty times the amount of sugar that Barbados produces. It also produces nearly 40 per cent of its electricity from sugar cane along with a few thousand tons of organic sugar. They make use of the factory mud and distillery waste to produce the compost in which they grow the organic sugar cane to produce the organic sugar. Sir, it was interesting to hear about that.

Sir, much has been said about the Government's new thrust. It is obvious that this Government is very supportive of the sugar cane industry, hence the issue of bonds. We know that is the fourth bond issue which substantiates and emphasises what I have said before. The Government is also looking at the technical level and high-fibre cane to produce electricity and growing it for other properties like sugar, syrup, molasses, and bagasse.

Mr. President, I also want to mention that I understand electricity was produced at Andrews and Portvale back in the 1980's. It was short-lived because the price which the power company offered to pay was not an economic one for the factories. I am sure that the Honourable Erskine Griffith, the Leader of Government Business will expand on that when he speaks and maybe will give us another explanation as well.

Mr. President, it has been pertinently proven that there is a future for the industry. If we change direction from sugar production to utilising many of the components of sugar cane, as it is possible to do, Government has the will and vision. Sir, cotton also holds good prospects if we approach it with energy and recognise that the economic value lies in further processing, ginning and selling lint. The setting up of the company to do the processing is again, a sign of Government being proactive.

Therefore, Mr. President, I have the greatest pleasure in supporting this Resolution and I am much obliged to you.

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: Mr. President, the Resolution before us is a money one and constitutes one of the three means by which the sugar industry was supported over the years.

Sir, there used to be an agricultural credit bank which dealt with large farmers and a peasant loan bank which dealt with small farmers. At one stage, these two institutions were financially strapped. The setting of the Barbados National Bank and the transfer of the sugar portfolio to that bank was another means of allowing the financing to continue even though overdraft facilities were the major means by which operations were financed.

Sir, at one time there was also a direct subsidy of $10 million a year to the sugar industry for a number of years. Throughout the last fifty years the sugar industry has been dependant on some form of credit subsidy. This debate has naturally been turned into a full-dressed discussion, as it should, on the whole agricultural industry. I do not think that we could quarrel too much about the financing of the sugar industry. If it exists it cannot finance itself and means must be found for ensuring that it is financed. That does not mean that we should not be looking seriously at reforming it and doing what we should do to ensure that it does not continue to be a great drain on the finances of the country.
4.20 p.m.

Therefore, I am more moved to discuss the subject of agriculture and hope that at some stage, given the sort of comments, responses, suggestions and proposals that we heard today, that at some stage there will be a full-dressed discussion on agriculture because agriculture is very important.

As a person from the rural area of Barbados, growing up in the 1930's and 1940's, I can speak with some certainty about the value of agriculture. If a parent wanted to finance a child's education, it was the occasional rearing of a pig and the sale of that pig would be to pay school fees and buy uniforms. The repairs to the house was dependent to the four tonnes of canes that the proprietor was able to get and the money from that would be for the purchase of shingles to put on the house and this was a way of life. More than this, during the hard times, people lived on credit. The village shopkeeper gave credit to the workers who would pay during the crop season. The crop season was an important season.

I have had the experience of going to the parish of St. Joseph, where I have a lot of relatives, and spending some time there. I saw people on Saturday nights, when they got paid going to the shop, going to the shops which were kept open so that they could get groceries for cooking next day. I have had this experience several times and I, therefore, understand the role of sugar in the culture of Barbados. I think it would be a great pity if it were to be completely eliminated from the landscape.

However, on the question of the new dimension of the sugar industry and the various proposals that are being put, the financing of that development would have absolutely nothing to do with this kind of Resolution which we have and, therefore, must be a separate financing mechanism to carry out the requisite feasibility studies to help train and encourage farmers and other likely investors in the new operations, there will have to be a lot of financing and public relations before any of these things can reach the stage of reality.

I worked in the Ministry of Housing and I am well aware of the project which existed at Uplands and the use of the cane pith for purposes of developing a building material. It was touted by both the developers and the Ministry at the time but it came to nought. Where is the material? Where is the evidence and documentation that should exist in relation to that? Do we have to start all over or can we vary what is there? I do not think that there is any need to reinvent the wheel if we can find some of the evidence that there is on projects like that.

The sugar cane industry, quite logically, led to a question of food security. Again, I am speaking from practical experience. During the period 1942/1943, 52 ships carrying food throughout the Caribbean were sunk in the Caribbean sea and during that period no food was available from import sources. In six weeks, the Department of Agriculture, led by a very able man who became Dr. Saint, mobilised the farming community to ensure that at least basic foods were available in that short time. In those days, not only the rural areas but few of the urban and suburban areas had the facility of electricity and, therefore, relied to a great extent on coal which was not coming from St. Lucia because the ships were being sunk. Barbadians used their ingenuity to cut wood, burn it, let it smoke for approximately five days to produce charcoal, which was the only means of providing heat for ironing in the society.

Sir, that kind of ingenuity will not be relevant in today's population who have been socialised and otherwise taught in a different environment and a different circumstance but the necessity to ensure that there is some security remains, and probably even greater was the sacrifice which people, in my boy days, withstood but it cannot be withstood by people who were brought up on *Chefette* and *Kentucky Fried Chicken et cetera*. It is a different society.

Sir, food security has to be given a prime place in this matter of agricultural reform. We cannot do as Dr. Saint did and mandatorily insisted that each plantation planted a certain acreage of sweet potatoes and yams; this would not happen on this occasion. Sir, we need to train our people into all the areas of production, management and marketing. When I refer to management, I mean keeping records, being able to account for their expenditure and receipts. If we are going to make a change in that direction, the area of training has to be given a high priority in this new era.

Sir, on Monday a friend of mine, a barber, called me to say that a friend of his had 600 bags of onions that he could not dispose of. If marketing is not properly done and if the relationship between production and marketing is not easily established, then we could be wasting time and frustrating farmers if they go into this area of food production and security without knowing how they can dispose of their excess produce.

Food security is necessary and the whole area of physical development of Barbados and the allocation of the land resources to the various competing industries should be taken very seriously and brought into focus for public discussion. I am heartened to hear that a sort of embargo or slowing down has been placed on the subdivision of agricultural land, but in doing this, I hope that a sense of equity prevails. Let me make a special comment relating to BARP, which in its effort to develop facilities for its members and the wider community, embarked upon a project of building a retirement village, an old peoples' home, if I may say that, for its members. A very kind landowner offered BARP

some 13 acres of land at a concessionary price, on the condition that BARP is able to get the Change of Use. If the Change of Use that BARP required is not had then, the land reverts back to the owner.
4.30 p.m.

This land sits in the middle of two housing developments that have been approved. One of 100 acres by a private developer, and one north of that land, where the National Housing Corporation (NHC) has built a number of houses. The 13 acres sit in the middle of that, in the sense that a private road passes east of the land and the development takes place east of that public road. It is a private development, and on the north side the development is occurring and has occurred now for a couple of years. The BARP request was turned down that the land should be kept for agricultural purposes. All I am saying is that I have no difficulty at all with maintaining that policy of ensuring that land is kept for agricultural purposes, but let there be some equity and transparent fairness in making these decisions.

On the particular Resolution, as I said, financing of the sugar industry has happened for many years, and financing where the industry has been in debt for many years, at one time to Barclays Bank and then to Barbados National Bank (BNB), to the Agricultural Credit Bank, the Peasants Loan Bank and, eventually, direct investment, direct subsidies and bonds as a means of financing.

Therefore, we cannot quarrel if you are keeping it but, the restructuring of the sugar cane industry which I am glad to hear about has to be done apace, or else we will be in this same position, as somebody pointed out as soon as next year, because the 2005 out-of-crop work has to start soon. If something is not done, I think we will be back here looking for a bond issue or some other means of financing very soon. I know that these changes cannot occur overnight but we are talking about them and, as I said, I know some of them have been talked about and some work done on them for as long ago as 20 years and yet, nothing has been realised. I am hoping that we work apace to ensure the continued subsidising of the sugar industry because, as it is, it will never be able to survive on its own.

I thank you.

SENATOR THE HON. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of this Resolution which seeks the approval of this Chamber for the Government of Barbados to act as guarantor, with respect to the payment of principle and interest concerning the redemption of a bond issue of $60 million being made by the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited.

Mr. President, after hearing all that was said by the Honourable Members in this Chamber, I do not think it is necessary for me to speak for too long but, in circumstances where I come from a constituency that is dominated by the sugar industry, and was dominated for many years by the sugar industry, I felt that I should speak.

I know that the constituents of St. Philip West will be eager to hear representation at some level regarding their particular interest. Therefore, I think it is necessary that I speak within this debate in that kind of context. The sugar industry in Barbados, as I said, has dominated that area. As you know, that constituency comprises areas like Four Square, Six Roads, Marchfield, Brereton, St. Patricks and Fairview. Those areas are still very much in agriculture.

Historically, the residents of those areas, I would say, benefitted considerably from the sugar industry, especially in terms of employment. It is also true that we bore the burden of the rest of the country, in terms of having to contend with smoke, ash, noise, and sometimes travelling on roads where equipment was being used that was less than safe.

Therefore, the Crop Season for people living in the rural areas and in the area that I know, while it was an exciting time in terms of people working, and the sweet smells coming from the factory, it was not always easy. While the entire country benefitted from the sugar industry in terms of the development of the infrastructure, the entire country did not carry that burden that the people in the rural constituencies carried.

There might very well ask that if so much money was made over the years in sugar, whether or not it is their turn to ensure that some of the money being made these days is ploughed back into the rural constituencies.

Certainly, in terms of the infrastructure, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. In St. Philip West for sure, there is considerable work that needs to be done. The people in those areas, having worked in the sugar industry and seen the benefits that came out of the sugar industry for the entire country, would be within their rights, I think, at this time to think that some great dividend would be paid to them in particular at this time.

As I said, many of these areas are still involved in agriculture. Many of the issues that were raised by my colleague, Senator Dr. Lowe with respect to concerns that these individuals would have, are also applicable to the people who live in St. Philip West. There are issues with respect to water. There are still issues with respect to irrigation. Having spoken to the Minister responsible for agriculture, I know that there are plans in train to address issues of water and to address matters of irrigation.
4.40 p.m.

Mr. President, with respect to irrigation, even though the price paid might be reasonable, the problem for a number of persons in these areas is that they do not have access to irrigation water.

Mr. President, I do not have a negative view of agriculture. Often it is often said that our generation may not wish to work in the fields and that we think it is something from which we need to get away. I do not know that is entirely true and I certainly do not have those reservations. Unfortunately, my talent is not with my hands, I never did needlework well, I was never a good artist, my plants struggled to grow. Only the heartiest of plants would grow in my garden, unfortunately, so this is not something at which I am good.

Mr. President, there are a number of individuals coming to my constituency office who are younger than I am, who are very much interested in agriculture. Obviously these young persons are not going to approach agriculture in the same way as the older generation would have. They have no intention of spending long hours unnecessarily in the hot sun. The only young persons who are going to spend long hours in the hot sun are young cricketers. The rest of them will not do it unnecessarily. They have no interest in being in a field and loading canes onto a lorry. Even though they are wonderful stories to listen to, nobody wants to go back to doing that, apart from the fact that it is extremely inefficient.

Mr. President, the young people who I meet these days who are interested in farming ... For example, I met one who has a number of Black belly Sheep. He wants to improve the quality of his stock and is looking for more land. He is looking for means by which he can feed them. He did not come to the Constituency Office looking for a job, he came looking to find out whether or not there are opportunities, incentives or facilities within Government that he could use, in order to improve his stock, and to ensure that this is a livelihood which could sustain him.

Mr. President, there are young persons like that young man who are interested in agriculture. Sir, for some of them, it is not as if they have a choice, it is something that is within their blood that makes them want to do it. They think of doing nothing else, other than being in the agricultural industry. It is, therefore, fortunate that we can have such persons.

Mr. President, since it is part of the philosophy of this administration to ensure that we exploit the potentials of all of our young people to its fullest, it is important that those young people who are interested in agriculture should have the facilities. I do not believe that we need to worry that we are pursuing an initiative that in the future, we will not have young being people involved.

Mr. President, the Barbados sugar industry has been unprofitable, and has been for a number of years but successive Governments have taken the view that the benefits coming out of the sugar industry far outweigh the fact that there is a need to provide some Government support to the industry. Sir, many of my colleagues have spoken to these matters, for example, critical to all States like Barbados is the earning of foreign currency and the matter of employment. Sir, it is said that there are approximately 5 200 individuals employed in the sugar industry but we must always bear in mind that 5 200 people translate into 5 200 households, which is extremely critical.

There are issues such as utilising the sugar industry and the sugar cane plant with respect to environmental purposes; the aesthetic appeal of the country; to maintaining a rural way of life which comes out of having an agricultural base in a society, which I believe is a very extremely valuable part of our culture and heritage.

Mr. President, there is then the matter of food security. This is a very important and integral part of the sugar industry, as was pointed out before, because plantations that are involved in the production of sugar, tend to be involved in the production of other crops, such as potatoes, yams, peas, *et cetera*.

Mr. President, in terms of food security, however, even though I understand that in many instances we cannot go back, I think one of the activities to which we need to go back, is the kitchen garden. One of the things that surprises me is that there are many individuals in Barbados who complain about the price of imported fruits and vegetables. These individuals have lands around them and many of them do not plant anything on those lands.

Mr. President, this was unheard of when I was growing up. When I was growing up, a person with even a small plot of land would have at least four or five trees planted on that land, which might have been a lime tree, a mango tree, a breadfruit tree, and an avocado tree. This would have helped to supplement their food stores, so that they did not have to buy everything from the supermarkets.

There were individuals who had small parcels of land called kitchen gardens, where persons would have grown a variety of crops for one's personal needs. I, for example, have had the example of my mother, while cooking, being able to go outside and take fresh produce from the garden with which to cook. Those of you who have had that experience would know that cooking in that manner, that the aroma coming from the pot is much different from that of frozen or cured items included in the cooking. It is not only pleasant but it also means that one would not have to take all of one's money and spend in the supermarket. One could

actually walk out one's backdoor and take in some of these produce. For the most part, all one would have had to do would be to beg for a piece of potato slip, plant it, water it, and one would have enough potatoes to make several meals out of them. Sir, unfortunately in Barbados we have moved away from that, which is something to which I think we have to return.

Mr. President, the Honourable Minister has pointed out and has shown us in great detail how this Government plans to turn the sugar industry into a sugar cane industry and I do not think there is any need to repeat them. I personally have a great deal of confidence in the ability of the Honourable Minister to assist the officials within his Ministry and to provide leadership and a vision in terms of effecting that policy in turning the sugar industry into a sugar cane industry.
4.50 p.m.

As Dr. Chandler said, he cannot do it alone but I have great confidence in him. I noticed that during the presentation by the Member for the Democratic Labour Party that there is also an indication of confidence in the Ministry of Agriculture which is gratifying to hear.

Sir, in seeking to turn around an industry a systematic approach must be taken. When I was Chairman of the BADMC, I recognised that a lot of work had been done in terms of studies, reports, consultations and having reviews with respect to all that had to be done to turn around the industry.

Sir, many individuals are of the view that it has taken a long time but in Barbados things take longer than they should and individuals from other countries view us as people intellectually capable but we need to work on implementation. Perhaps it is a cultural thing but we have to focus on it and address it because our ability is not questioned to come up with ideas and plans but within the international community there is a question mark on our ability to quickly implement. Sir, so far, this administration has shown that we can plan and also implement.

Sir, one of the major issues which has arisen with respect to agriculture has to do with the utilisation of land for agricultural purposes. We should not deny that there are competing claims for the use of land in Barbados because we have a limited land mass. Those in tourism would argue that it is legitimate to take some areas out of agriculture and put it into tourism because it is the leading sector in Barbados. Sir, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that thinking.

There are those who would argue that some areas should be taken out of agriculture and put into housing. On the other hand you have those of the view, Dr. Chandler for example, that you need not take another single acre out of agriculture for any other purpose because there is enough land available.

Sir, all of these arguments reflect the desire of specific constituents in terms of what they perceive their needs to be. I see that as a positive thing but I think we need to make a proper assessment of the land available in Barbados.

Sir, Government has started to do that with respect to the land available in Barbados. There are going to be competing claims for economic, environmental, recreational and educational purposes because there are many purposes to which land is put in Barbados.

Our programme would be one where we make an assessment of the amount of land needed in order to pursue our vision for agriculture. We will also make an assessment of the land required to pursue our tourism, recreational, social and environmental objectives.

The study is ongoing and when we have completed it, we would be able to determine in the future if a piece of land is taken out of agriculture, the implications of so doing. It would not be in circumstances where we do it and hope for the best. This has to be the new way of thinking for everything we do in Barbados.

Sir, within a small country like Barbados we need to be extremely meticulous in how we manage every single resource that we have because we do not have the luxury of having large tracks of lands. One of the issues often raised is that agriculture tends to be put in opposition with tourism and tourism related services, the construction sector and professional services but in other countries they coexist. In my view, having a diversified economy is an objective that we have been pursuing for a number of years and I believe they compliment each other. Previously we talked about the linkages between agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, food processing and agriculture. Sir, there are also linkages between agriculture and the new non-tourism services on which Government is focusing.

Sir, a great deal of expertise has been developed in Barbados over the years in the agricultural sector especially in areas such as research and development and there is absolutely no need why those special skills, developed in Barbados, cannot be used in the rest of the world either by having individuals come into Barbados to receive training or do research or by the individuals in Barbados who are so skilled going elsewhere to provide training or do research in other countries.

Sir, individuals have come to Barbados over the years to assist the Government of Barbados in the agricultural

sector and there is absolutely no reason why we should not be providing similar services. Within the agricultural context one of the issues dear to me is to see the development of the greater use of the facility of the cooperatives by persons in agriculture. Since I became the Minister of Commerce under which credit unions and cooperatives fall, ... it has come home to me more strikingly that while the credit unions have managed to develop in such a way that they are now quite prosperous, obviously the credit unions are a success story for Barbados. Unfortunately, the non-financial cooperatives have not done as well. It is my desire as Minister of Commerce to see the cooperative instrument being used more effectively by individuals in the agriculture sector and other business sectors in Barbados. The cooperative is obviously one of the best tools that we have for marketing and sourcing inputs. It fits well within the current business culture of Barbados where every individual wants to ensure that he maintains ownership of his small business.
5.00 p.m.

Sir, even though we will talk about the virtues of incorporating a company and issuing shares and having several owners or we speak about the desirability of having partnerships and sharing risk, providing opportunities for a person, not necessarily to be tied to the business but so that they can improve their skills. We have argued this for many years and still within the small business sector it is extremely important to everyone to ensure that he or she continues to be a 100 per cent owner of his or her business.

Sir, within that cultural context which I do not think we will be able to change in the short-term, I believe the cooperative vehicle is a solution for the agriculture sector in Barbados where they can maintain the ownership of their small businesses but participate in a cooperative. This is something that I personally would be very interested in pursuing.

Sir, it is always my responsibility, I believe, to put much of this within a global context. I will not speak of the implications with respect to our trade negotiations because I think the Honourable Minister dealt with that. I would like to put it within the context of competitiveness.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, you have five minutes more.

SENATOR THE HON. Miss L. V. EASTMOND: Thank you, Sir.

I believe that within the context of competitiveness we have to bring the agriculture industry into the new information age and that is what we need to do. This administration has a vision for seeing Barbados become a high quality jurisdiction for whatever it engages in. We usually hear about a high quality destination when we speak about tourism and international business but it also applies to agriculture. Therefore, in terms of the presentation which the Honourable Minister made, you will see that he referred to high quality products such as cotton, lamb and a sugar cane industry. We are going for quality and uniqueness wherever we can. For example, in terms of cotton we must be going for efficiency and innovation; in entrepreneurship, research and development are critical and all of this cuts across all the economic sectors in Barbados.

Mr. President, in agriculture we must focus on intellectual property and its value. Internationally, intellectual property is really the economic driver in a number of activities these days and finally, the utilisation of technology.

Sir, all of these things are important to the agricultural industry and its thrust for Barbados. While we must write our history and while we must not forget the sugar cane that was called ‘brown sugar’ or ‘brown girl’, while we must not forget about those things we have to make sure that the agriculture sector does not lag behind all of the other things that we want to do in the serviced sector and make sure that we bring agriculture along with us so that we are looking at a high quality product for a high quality jurisdiction, Barbados.

Mr. President, therefore, I wish to support this Resolution and I am much obliged to you, Sir.

SENATOR Miss. S. C. V. HUSBANDS: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution before this Honourable Chamber concerning the bond to aid the sugar cane industry in Barbados. I also want to thank all Senators who spoke today. I must say that they have stirred me emotionally by bringing back memories of my childhood and the things that we did around the crop season and I think particularly of Senator Lowe and Senator Collymore. I had forgotten about my grandmother’s shop and how she opened late at night to accommodate persons to buy groceries. It gave me some warm feelings today and I want to thank them for that and I really enjoyed it.

Sir, as we look at the future of sugar cane and agriculture in Barbados, indeed, while there are some difficulties and challenges, there is certainly hope for the future.

Sir, Barbados is faced with the difficulty of reshaping a modern nation and that is not very easy. There is a balancing act that you have to play with regards to our resources, how we are going to spend it, what is the best mix and the best way we are going to use our existing resources to get the best possible outcome. Certainly when

we are looking at the matter of our land, competition for agriculture, tourism and housing, no matter how you swing that cap or whoever you have to deny you are going to get licks.

Mr. President, it reminds me of the fable of a father and son walking along with a donkey. Someone saw them walking the donkey and said,"You all are so silly, why don't somebody ride the donkey?" The father put the son on top of the donkey and as they were further down the road someone said, "Why a young strapping boy like you sitting down on the donkey and your father is walking? Don't you think that you should get down and let your father ride?" The son got down and the father got up on the donkey. As they were walking further on somebody said, "Look at that old man sitting on that donkey and has that poor child walking?" Then both of them got on the donkey. As they walked further on somebody complained that they were killing the donkey. So they both got off and then they carried the donkey.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss S. C. V. HUSBANDS: No matter what they did, somebody had a problem with whatever decision they made. No matter how they tried to please, they were going to get licks and this is the case with the use of our land. Whatever you do or whoever you try to satisfy you are going to get licks. The only thing to beat that is to provide Barbados with the best optimum blend of the use of our existing resources to maximise the economic and social benefits for Barbadians.

Sir, the challenge for agriculture was nicely outlined by the Honourable Minister today. He looked at the challenges that are being experienced in terms of our competition with beet sugar, increasing output of the sugar cane per acre, the climatic changes, the eventual loss of preferential treatment and, of course, the competing use of the land.

Mr. President, one of the challenges that we need to consider, and it has been mentioned, is that the outlook of Barbadians is going to be critical to the success of the new thrust that we are going to put into agriculture. Indeed, without addressing and attending to how Barbadians see and relate to agriculture, our efforts are going to be in vain. Therefore, it is very important that marching beside that programme of agricultural reform, must be a streamline holistic effort to bring change to all sections of the population, in relation to how they relate to agriculture. I want to speak to that a little more later on.

5.10 p.m.

Right now, the crisis that is being experienced within the sugar cane industry and in agriculture and the cry by our farmers for assistance caused by the challenges whether it is with water, whether it is access to land, whether it is a market for the produce, whether it is insurance or whatever, this crisis really is unlike what occurred in Barbados many years ago.

As far back as the 1870s those early Barbadians also faced a crisis in the sugar cane industry. They were faced with actually the same challenges that we are faced with here in 2004. Barbados was faced at that time with a severe economic crisis. They had riots just prior to that period. They had competition from beet sugar. The beet sugar producers were also subsidising their farmers. They suffered with severe drought and then found that they could not get the yield from the acreage that they wanted. They also had disease that attacked the bovine cane. This made it difficult for them to keep up their output. The early Barbadian farmers were in despair and did not know what to do.

In the midst of this crisis, Mr. President, up came a Barbadian John Redman Bovell and true to the Barbadian spirit, when our backs are up against the wall, somebody gets up and says, no, there is something that can be done, let us find a way to do this and John Redman Bovell got together with a J. B. Harris who was a Professor of Chemistry, and decided that they were going to do something about the problem confronting the sugar cane industry to alleviate this crisis which was threatening to collapse the entire economy of the nation.

They started doing some research and began to train and educate the farmers in the value of fertilising their fields. They also did a great deal of scientific research which was so successful that it led to the evolution of the identification of new varieties of cane that were resistant to the particular pest to which the bourbon were susceptible. Sir, not only did this particular initiative save the Barbadian farmers, but that technology was able to be exported to other sugar cane producers and provide answers for those farmers who were also faced with the same challenges.

Therefore, as far back as the 1870's, Barbados was a model for many things and certainly in the area of agriculture, Barbados played its part. As a result of that, the yield went up and the disease was reduced. The problem of competition still remained which led to the emergence of Joseph Chamberlain, after whom our Chamberlain bridge is named. He was the Secretary of State of the Colonies at the time, and he set out to try to save the plantations from total economic collapse. This is similar to the effort that we are making today in relation to this sugar bond and trying to keep our plantations profitable and aid them in being able to make money.

In order to save them from bankruptcy, he became a very fierce advocate and was able to secure the granting of monies to aid the plantations out of their difficulties. He also strongly represented them in their fight with the sugar beet

producers, in terms of the subsidy system that they set up to prop up their own industries. He was able to persuade them to abolish that system. Mr. President, that is not unlike what we are doing today, in terms of the advocacy that we are engaging in the various arenas, whether it is the WTO, the EU, *et cetera*.

There was another Barbadian who rose up at that time, Sir Herbert Greaves and he was able to secure an £80 000 grant to farmers. He thought that, you know something, if we just take this money and divide it up among all of these unprofitable plantations, it is not going to work, the money will be gone and they still will not be profitable. Let us put this in a revolving loan fund and allow them to borrow and use it to retool, and pull themselves out of this economic hole and become more profitable.

Sir, this led to the setting up of the Sugar Industry Agricultural Bank. This is not unlike what we have today in terms of the Agricultural Development Fund that has been established by Government to aid agriculture and the sugar industry, to be able to access loans to help them to retool and have working capital, *et cetera*.

Therefore, Barbados is not unfamiliar with the crisis that confronts agriculture and sugar today. Barbados at this point in time, is being challenged once again to rise up and find meaningful ways to deal with the issues confronting sugar. We are having a number of estates that are experiencing problems. We need to find new varieties of sugar, whether it is the fuel cane, *et cetera*. We are faced with competition. We are faced with subsidies. We are faced with international pressure and so, we too have to find a way. Therefore, what are the things that have been put in place?

Mr. President, it is not just this $60 million bond that is needed urgently by the sugar industry to assist it in going forward, but what this new generation of Barbadians and the Barbados Labour Party have done, is put forward a whole comprehensive programme for the development of agriculture in Barbados. Studies have been done by the Sugar Cane Industry Tripartite Committee and they had a number of recommendations that were outlined by the Minister, looking at a state of the art cane centre, the Tilby cane separation, animal feed processor, electricity, sugar packaging *et cetera*.

This cannot be a one time thing. The research that is currently being done today, in order to find new and better ways that we can extract maximum products from the sugar cane, requires that we just do not do this for now to solve a crisis and stop. This research needs to be an ongoing thing that we are doing because I think this is going to be the life blood and the salvation of agriculture in Barbados. We have to be willing to put resources behind it to make sure that it continues because, it saved the early Barbadians in the 1870's and provided answers for other people who were in the sugar industry.

I am saying that we have to pay very careful attention to the whole area of research and development, so that we can continue to identify those niche markets that we can target which will allow Barbados to hold its own internationally, to have an export product that can earn foreign exchange, the value of the intellectual property, as well as safeguard our own food security. These are the issues that we need to pay attention to and research and development are going to be critical to that process.

In the economic proposals by the Prime Minister, he outlined the major aim of the Government in relation to what he saw, in terms of the development of agriculture from here on in. One of the objectives is to move the contribution of agriculture from 3.2 per cent to 4.6 per cent of GDP. In those set of proposals, there are more than 25 initiatives in agriculture alone, dealing with a wide range of items, whether it was the cotton industry, black belly sheep, flour industry, Scotland District, breeding, or assistance to various sectors. Loads of things were put in those initiatives to aid and assist our farmers in helping to pull up the agricultural sector to where it belongs.

One of the challenges that we are faced with, Mr. President, and it was intimated by another speaker earlier, is that Barbados imports close to $330 million in food. We are consuming food that is not grown in our region. I have said in this Honourable Chamber already and I will state it again, the food that grows in the region where you live is the best food for your body because of where you live. The food is adapted and adjusted for the climate and it is the best thing for you to eat. As Barbadians, we have departed so far from those basics and if we make the effort to create food security and we have changed the taste of the current Barbadian, we are wasting time.

Therefore, I want to strongly urge that in the schools, in the Food, Health and Nutrition Programme, children are focussed on the use and preparation of local foods for their sustenance. This cannot be urged enough. We need to get back to those foods. They are wholesome and they are appropriate.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. President, some of the other things that were outlined by the Right Honourable Prime Minister, were that the Government is prepared to give full protection to the agriculture sector in all forms. Certainly, we have seen that in the recommendations and initiatives outlined by the Honourable Minister today.

Mr. President, a number of things were also identified that we need to accelerate the access of the industry, to

technology and retooling. This is important but for that to work, the mind set of the Barbadian farmer has to change. He must realise that there are new and different techniques being used and he has to be willing to let go of the old ways and to experiment and to embrace the new ways of doing things, in order that he can maximise the benefits of the access to technology and to retooling.

Mr. President, benchmarking is very important and this is why it is important for farmers to travel, to see what others are doing. Sir, in Chile, I have had the privilege of seeing how they use the greenhouse technology. I was absolutely fascinated because here is a country that is extremely mountainous, then there is this inner mountain plateau of narrow strips of land, and that is the only place where they can grow food. They also build their homes on the hills. Sir, I was impressed with the amount of agriculture that is taking place in that limited land space.

Chile has effectively used the greenhouse technology and has grown a large variety of crops, including flowers, dwarf avocado trees, strawberries, fruits, vegetables of every kind. Therefore, food in Chile is extremely cheap because they have access to the level of agricultural production that makes a meal relatively inexpensive.

Mr. President, if we can look at embracing those technologies, and I know the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development is going to speak to the issue of greenhouse technology and about the transformation that it can bring to industry, I think that we can begin to produce food at more competitive prices that make it cheaper for us to feed ourselves, while, at the same time, remaining extremely healthy.

Mr. President, we can only know about this, we can only see what are the possibilities, and we can only see how we could better use the limited land space we have, if we go and benchmark and see what others are doing. Therefore, we would want to encourage and facilitate that for our farmers.

Mr. President, there also has to be managed market access to the local market and the Government has already put in place where they have mandated that institutions that are using produce, to take at least 60 per cent of their inputs from local production. This must be monitored. We must ensure that the institutions are doing that, and that those contracts are being spread among as many farmers as possible. There is also another major initiative, that is the protection of our intellectual property.

Mr. President, things I feel that we need to pay very close attention to, are some of the other initiatives that are being pursued by the regular and average Barbadian, for example, the person mentioned by Senator Eastmond, who came to her office to find out what was available for him with regards to agricultural farming. There are a number of people out there who are not aware of the support or the mechanisms that are being put in place. Sometimes these persons feel alone and do not think there is anything out there to help them, but there are a lot of individuals out there who have ideas.

Mr. President, last year I remember two young boys from a secondary school, where their mothers brought them to see me. They had worked in their science class on a project developing mosquito repellant from locally-produced fruits. Sir, those youngsters shared with me the care that they had taken in altering the ratio of the mixtures, the testing of getting people to rub the repellant on their skin and timing it to see how long it would have repelled the mosquitoes. They repeated the process in a very scientific way, until they were able to come up with the very best mix and were able to give an assurance as to how long this repellant would have worked.

Mr. President, I was impressed. Here were two young secondary school boys who were thinking creatively, who were identifying something that could be sold to our tourists and throughout the Caribbean, and if properly marketed, could be taken throughout the world, where people are 'hum-bugged' by those pests.

Sir, those boys had a number of concerns such as how could they have gone forward? How could they have protected the intellectual property? Would it be theirs or does it belong to the school? Who could have help them with this matter? What are the legal issues? Would funding be given to them as they were so young? Would they need others to work with?

Sir, they were full of questions and it shows that they were thinking. The point is, this is a generation of Barbadians that we want to encourage, who can develop that type of outlook if we are going to make a success of this new initiative.

Mr. President, I am strongly committed to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, therefore, I see the entire region as our market space. I see the entire region as our economic space in which we can move. I feel very strongly that our farmers have to think differently about how they are going to drive agriculture into the future. Barbados is only 166 square miles and, therefore, if agriculture is going to grow so that we can get maximum benefit, we have to think about establishing farms in Guyana and in other territories.

Mr. President, if we are thinking beyond the technical aspects of simply producing agricultural produce to the whole entrepreneurial spirit to where agriculture could go,

we will see that there are opportunities for us in Guyana to take Barbadian expertise, capital and intellectual property, and begin to build a number of massive farms there, where there is no limit nor shortage of land space. This would help to feed and to provide for the local and tourism sectors. It would also create foreign exchange and wealth in the agricultural community, utilising and marrying our resources with that of the Guyanese and, therefore, bringing benefit to both nations. This is the direction in which we have to be thinking.

Sir, immediately we may feel that because it would be grown in another country that it would not be Barbadian or that we cannot think of going there to do farming. But just in the same way as the Europeans came here to farm and had taken the profits of the sugar and built the wealth of their nation, so too can we.

I know sometimes it is easy to feel limited to producing it locally but we have to think beyond that. We have to get our farmers to think in terms of developing massive farms that have a global outlook and a global outreach.

I am obliged to you, Mr. President.

SENATOR I. St. C. LINTON: Mr. President, I rise to speak on this Resolution which is before this Honourable Chamber, the guarantee of bonds for raising BDS$60 million to effect a true reformation and restructuring of the agricultural sector, particularly in the area of sugar cane.

Mr. President, I would like to compliment Senator Griffith, Leader of Government Business, for his clear projections for the future of this industry. As I listen to him here, as I listen to him in other places, I can feel the feeling that he has for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and I want to urge him to keep focused.

I also want to compliment Senator Doctor Lowe for his tremendous presentation this morning. As I said off the table, he has opened the Democratic Labour Party's batting on this Resolution at number eight and has scored some good runs. 5.30 p.m.

I propose to answer some of the questions which he asked but not to give a political answer. He said that he was speaking non-partisan. I am going to join him in that and help him to come to knowledge with some of the gaps he missed in relation to questions he asked.

Mr. President, Government sets out policies and programmes to bring about a particular result forgetting that there are times when other results would turn out in a negative way.

I want to preface the answering of his question to two profound statements that were set to music by Stedson Wiltshire or Red Plastic Bag. There are two statements that seem to be against each other but yet are concomitant. He made his way to Calypso King with *"Mr. Harding Can't Burn"* and *"Sugar Made us Free"*. These were two profound statements because the history of sugar turned up hard times but also sweet times particularly during the period of 1960 and during the 1980's. Sir, you will notice that I am covering periods of both parties in Government.

Mr. President, I clearly remember when the Prime Minister, the Right Excellent Errol Barrow, one of our National Heroes, made the statement that he sold the sugar and, therefore, is taking four per cent of the profits. During those periods I wondered why we as a people in Barbados did not look at what we are now looking at through this Resolution of restructuring and reforming the industry. Sir, some of these ideas and programmes should have started a long time ago but sometimes the success of Government tricks us and we become reluctant and are not thoughtful enough.

Several decisions were made during the period of the 60's to the 80's of which we are reaping the results. During this period, almost twenty sugar factories went out of grinding canes and producing sugar as well as fancy molasses and so on. I want to enlighten everyone here as well as those following the discussion on the radio. The factories in St. Michael were Warrens, Lower Estate and the Belle. In St. James there were Sandy Lane and Porters. In St. Peter there was Haymans. In St. Lucy there were Fairfield, Spring Hall and Broomfield. Sir, these factories and Haggatts in St. Andrew were all closed and then this Party built Portvale factory.

This Party also sought to bring back Haggatts but the Democratic Labour Party said they were buying old iron but they made it old iron, forgetting that there was no way farmers under the hill in St. Andrew could get cane out of St. Andrew. Sir, factories in all the parishes in Barbados including St. John, St. Joseph and St. Philip went out of sugar production during that period.

Sir, a small farmer cannot produce cane when we only have two factories, the cost of producing the canes and getting them to the factory is high so the small cane farmer has to close down his operation. The result was that the culture of cane that supported the small shops around the country 'went through the window'.

Sir, in the 1970's a young lady in politics went around the country and told the workers in the sugar industry that the Barbados Labour Party Government made them into beast of burden, that they should come out of the fields, make clothes, do smocking and so forth. Sir, this turned

individuals from agriculture in this country. We then had to import labour from St. Kitts and St. Vincent to reap the sugar cane. At the same time, the opportunity for young people to gain secondary and tertiary education also impacted on the ability for us to earn foreign exchange along with the competition that existed in the world. Sir, all these things impacted on sugar and agriculture in general in Barbados. I passed the area of the plantation house at Lodge Hill and I saw the vehicles of almost every Cabinet Member, which meant that a meeting was going on between the Ministers of Government of Barbados and that plantation owner. If you check from Jackson down to Grazettes and to Trents in the north you would realise that all those areas were sugar lands. There was a deliberate attempt to bring all of those lands out of agriculture and construct houses. At the same time the then Government allowed the Jews, Syrians and other people from the East to come into Barbados and set up real estate agencies and this started the high cost of lands for housing in Barbados.

5.40 p.m.

Sir, the firm Cottle Catford bought some land that I lived on and I remember distinctly that instructions were given by the Minister of Housing and Lands, I think it was 1972/1973, that Solicitors in Barbados give up their portfolios in dealing with lands and mortgages in this country. I was given until the end of December to pay. My family almost lost the lot that my grandmother left and which I bought out from the other members of my family. I did not have the money at the time to pay for the land and a good friend I met at Cottle Catford helped me. Sir, Governments do things to bring about certain results but they cannot always guarantee the results that they want would come about and that is what happened in this case.

Mr. President, let me look at what happened between 1981 and 1986. Previously we produced approximately 150,000 tonnes of sugar, after that we never reached 100,000 tonnes of sugar. However, after that the Ministry of Agriculture and Dr. Johnny Cheltenham brought sugar back to 111,000 tonnes in 1986. In addition to that we exported vegetables and onions to Trinidad. After 1986 there was a decrease in the production of sugar.

Sir, we had a problem with cotton because of CARSICOT and its successor. The then Ministry of Agriculture in the Democratic Labour Party Government of 1986 to 1991, in order to bring about a cotton industry destroyed all the ratoons in St. Philip and other places such as Fairview and Cotton Vale and sugar failed. I am not saying this to attack the Democratic Labour Party. I am simply saying that Governments do things that will not always turn out the way they want it to. Therefore, when we look at reforming an industry we look at it from all angles and determine what is the best thing to do.

Sir, yesterday I heard a Member of the Democratic Labour Party say that we should not sell the excess sugar but it should be stored for the next year. Sir, that Honourable Member is a sugar technologist and every year he gets a bag of Barbados sugar for himself but Barbadians are not to taste any of it. There was a time the consumers of sugar in Barbados were complaining about the dirty sugar that was being imported into this country. Certainly, it was not coming from Guyana.

Asides.

SENATOR I. St.C. LINTON: Sir, people were making a lot of money off the sugar but this sugar was making people sick.

I want to urge the Honourable Minister and this Government to proceed with its proposals so that whatever you do with the sugar cane, make sure that we Barbadians use some of our sugar every year and let us get back some of our fancy molasses. If we are talking about food security that has to be an aspect of it. I am sure that every Senator in here will rise to the occasion and support that.

Mr. President, the best things for us in Barbados are what we produce whether it is agriculture, handicraft or furniture. We live in a dynamic and competitive world where the larger countries are seeking to recolonise us to a so-called world trade which, as I said in my view, will never come about.

Sir, a country, I think it is Mexico, recently won a case against the United States of America and the United States of America said that they are going to appeal it. If Mexico is the country that won the case against the United States of America, that country is much bigger than Barbados. I think that Brazil also won a case against the United States of America and they said that they would appeal it. Sir, the United States of America is the country that is supposed to be the country that is leading the freedom of trade but when it comes to themselves there is no freedom and this is what we are up against.

I want to join my colleague, Senator Husbands, in saying that it is time that we stop beating the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and understand how important it is for us in the Caribbean to recognise that we should not be going to any international court for each other. We should be settling our problems and seeking to join and live together.

5.50 p.m.

When you think of what just happened in Jamaica on the CCJ and the ruling that has come about that is an example of what we must do in spite of those

politicians whom, I believe, it is their time to leave the political scene, and stop creating problems for the inhabitants in the Caribbean.

In every area of our development, we must work hand in hand in the Caribbean and cooperate with each other. When we, as a people begin to develop the products that we are talking about as a result of this Resolution, we are not going to keep all for ourselves. Surely, we would want to sell to our Caribbean people and, surely, if the Caribbean people would look for other such projects in the same manner, we will buy from them.

I am simply urging this Honourable Chamber to have the idea that Stedson Wiltshire has given us in his music and lyrics that there will be hard times as we go along in this world, but sometimes it will be sweet too.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Miss P.E. PARRIS: Mr. President, I rise to lend my support to this Resolution before this Honourable Chamber, knowing that this is a clear indication of the Government's commitment to this industry. It is quite clear that the Government is walking the walk and this bond issue will assist in the survival of this struggling sugar industry to a sustainable sugar cane industry.

Sir, this industry remains to be an integral part of the Barbadian economy as a foreign exchange earner, as well as providing employment for some 5 000 persons. Many persons across the length and breadth of this country have provided for their families by toiling long and hard in the sugar industry.

I can identify with what Senator Collymore said earlier as it relates to persons waiting until the Crop Season to repair their homes and for the shopkeepers, having been raised in a shop, and since these persons have toiled long and hard and I think we owe it to them, and the persons who are still employed in this industry to sustain the industry and to make sure that their labour has not gone in vain.

As we approach the Crop Over Season, I think it is timely for me to raise this issue. I believe that more recognition should be given to the King and Queen of the Crop. I believe if we go to any school and ask students the names of the King and Queen of the Crop for last year, they cannot tell you. It places emphasis on the importance of the sugar industry to this country's economy. These persons come out at Crop Over and we hear of them during the Crop Over Season and after that, nothing is said about them.

It would be interesting to know that Mr. Hurley, who was the King for last year, won that title five times, and Ms. Judy Cumberbatch won it eight times. These are things that our children should be told, so that they know the valuable contribution that these persons are making to the economy of this country. I am hoping that some emphasis will be placed on them, and not just bring them out at Crop Over. They should be invited to appear at national events. They are just as important as the Calypso King and Queen.

However, the sugar industry, as it is today, is not the same as it was 20 years ago, but I do not believe that we can sit idly by and let it die. The industry in Barbados has been reduced but continues to survive, unlike other neighboring Caribbean countries like St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Grenada, where the industry does not exist. Now, we have seen that it is also disappearing in Puerto Rico, so I think this is the opportunity for us to save the industry.

The reasons given for the decline are many and complex. We hear about changing economic social circumstances and generating more attractive alternatives for the use of the land. Mr. President, with these changes being known, we continue to hear persons speak about many factories that existed in the 1980s and the amount of the sugar that was produced then.

It is all about viability and profitability. Studies were done to show that it was not profitable to have all those sugar factories and that is why we only have two sugar factories existing in this country today. I think the time has come for us to stop dwelling on the past and to come together and save the industry. We are aware that change is constant, so what was done 50 years ago, as it relates to the sugar industry, the trucks and the types of canes that we had, that has changed. We are living in the changing world and we have to come together and save the industry.

Senator Nicholls spoke about in 1993, when the BAMC was experiencing financial difficulty. In July to December of 2003, the BAMC was still having financial difficulty. They were at the mercy of their bankers. They had an overdraft facility and they went in excess of it and I know how stressful that could have been for the management of the BAMC. With this bond issue, we will see some assistance coming to them. This overdraft allows them to do the maintenance and refurbishment to get the factories ready for the start of the 2004 Crop Season and allows them to pay wages and salaries to their employees. Therefore, this bond issue will help them to alleviate some of their financial difficulty.

I believe that we have to be futuristic. The new initiatives involving the use of fuel cane varieties to produce renewable fuel and the proposed cane separation plant, when this true potential is known of the sugar plant and it is exploited, it will be of benefit to the stakeholders and the country as a whole. The funding provided by this issue, will

greatly assist in the survival, as I said earlier, of this industry and this country's economy by providing foreign exchange and employment to some 5 000 persons.

Mr. President, I heard the eloquent presentation made by the Leader of Government Business of this Chamber, and I know the positive impact that this bond issue can have on the operations of the BAMC. I also note that the interest rates are attractive, 5.75 per cent for the $20 million and for the $40 million, 5.4 per cent.
6.00 p.m.

Mr. President, taking all of this into consideration, I wholeheartedly support this Resolution and would urge Honourable Senators to do the same, so that we can save the sugar industry.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, I rise to make a very brief intervention in this debate, the object of which is to get this Honourable Chamber's approval for the Government's guarantee of a bond issue in the sum of BDS$60 million for the purpose of financing the sugar industry.

Mr. President, there has been very interesting debate on this Resolution. It has not been divisive in partisan terms, and although that from time to time some partisan barbs were appropriately hurled, I do not intend to change the tenure of the debate by anything which I would have to say.

Mr. President, it has been observed that the sugar industry of Barbados is, to a certain extent, *co-terminus* with the settlement of Barbados, for within about 15 years of this island being settled, sugar was introduced to it. Sir, from then until now sugar has been a direct and indirect factor in the lives of people of this country.

Mr. President, mounds of sentimentality have grown up around this industry and, of course, some of the speeches made in the Honourable Senate today are evidence of that fact which people have sentimentally and emotionally attached to the industry. Senator Linton was not wrong when he referred to Red Plastic Bag 'exhortising' about sugar making us free. I believe in the same song he asked the question, how could things be sweet if our sugar is gone? He did not foresee a Barbados without a sugar industry as we have known it for over a number of years.

Mr. President, of course, Senator Eastmond has referred to the constituency of St. Philip West, in which I have lived for the better part of my life, and which I know how active the industry has been in that part of St. Philip. In the village of Marchfield, in which I have grown up, certainly in the first half of the 1960's, when I got up on mornings and looked to the north, I saw Harrow's Plantation. If I looked to the south, I saw either Oldbury or Foursquare Plantation. If I looked west, I saw Carrington's Plantation, and on my way to school, I had to pass by Searles Plantation. Again, to the north-east but out of sight was Three Houses Plantation, at which my father worked, and at which due to out-dated machinery, he lost his life on the last day of the crop in 1960. That factory also claimed the foot of an uncle of mine.

Mr. President, I know the importance of the industry to the parish of St. Philip as Senator Eastmond has indicated and I can imagine that Senator Griffith, who I think grew up to the west of Foursquare Plantation, would have been subjected to all of the sights and sounds of factory life at Foursquare and would have inhaled many of the fragrances of that factory while it was working during the crop season.

Mr. President, to some degree all of us would have had some connection, either directly or indirectly, with the sugar industry of Barbados but we have to face the fact that the industry, as we have known it, does not exist any longer. In fact, I contend that it is on its death bed, and has been for some time, with a very loud death rattle in its throat.

Mr. President, this has to do with the fact that it had a very short golden age. There was a time around the year 1750, I believe, when the British were able to boast because of sugar and because of the extent of production in Barbados, that Barbados was the most precious jewel in the British crown. That statement, of course, concealed the fact that the industry at that time benefitted unlimitedly from slave labour and, therefore, labour costs outside the purchase of the slaves themselves, were well nigh non-existent.

Mr. President, by the second half of the 18th Century, commentators began to comment that because of the overuse of the soils of Barbados for sugar production, that the country was suffering from soil exhaustion and attempts were made to import soil from Suriname. Those attempts, of course, were stymied by the fact that it was soon discovered that one could not have imported Suriname soil, without, at the same time, importing Surinamese wood ants.

Mr. President, coming on to the end of the 18th Century, arguments began to be raised in Britain and in other parts of the British Commonwealth about the religious and moral defensibility of the practice of slavery and, of course, the slave trade. Therefore, from the second half of the 18th Century, the industry began to experience serious difficulties in Barbados.

By 1808, when the slave trade was abolished, planters found themselves in a situation where they had to confront the issue of how they were going to renew the

labour, hitherto so easily accessible to them. That situation would have gotten no better in the 1930's when slavery was abolished, certainly by 1838.

Mr. President, with that transition from status to contract, with planters no longer being able to relate to labour in terms of status as slaves but to individuals who could not decide whether or not they wanted to work on the plantation, led to other problems which the industry and the planter class of Barbados had to face.

Mr. President, I believe there is a book written by a C. Wells, called: "*The Ordeal of Free Labour*". Sir, for the planter class of Barbados and other parts of the Caribbean, with labour becoming free, the issue of production cost in the industry had to be confronted in a way that it was never before confronted. Therefore, between 1838 and 1845, the industry went through a very critical period of adjustment.
6.10 p.m.

Of course, the planters of Barbados were not necessarily renowned for re-investment in the industry, therefore, backward methods both at the field level and the factory level had characterised the industry. Then, in 1846 another poison arrow was aimed at the heart of the industry when the British Sugar Duties Act was passed which by 1854 ensured all sugars into the British market came in with no duty. This confronted West Indian and Barbadian planters with other difficulties because up to 1846, West Indian planters were accustomed to being mollycoddled and wet-nursed by easy access to the British market and favourable prices for the sugar exported to that market.

Sir, by 1884, because of superior techniques of production in Europe and because Britain itself and other European countries had begun to focus on beet sugar which was dumped on the British market creating problems of pricing for Barbadian and British West Indian sugar which by 1897 led to a famous Commission which recommended to the British that the British West Indian sugar industry, including the Barbadian sugar industry, should be rescued by some form of price support. The British Parliament obliged and threw out a lifeline to the Barbadian sugar planters.

Therefore, the nineteenth century was a critical time for the Barbadian sugar industry. At that time as well, while the Barbadian sugar industry and other British West Indian islands were experiencing problems, the Cuban sugar industry stepped on to the stage and by superior modes of production, virgin soil and more sophisticated forms of investment, the Cuban sugar industry along with that of Java, Mauritius and Louisiana in the United States of America came into the cane sugar ring and made their presence felt. Sir, to this day, the Cuban sugar industry is still one to be reckoned with.

The comment made by the late Dr. Eric Williams that by the end of the nineteenth century, what it would take 440 sugar factories to produce could be produced comfortably by 20 Cuban sugar factories was proof, if any were needed, that the state of efficiency of the industry here was far below par. This makes the point, in my view, that for about nearly 200 years this industry has been in crisis propped up by preferences and price supports and in some cases by very cheap labour.

Sir, the 20th century has been no different and the sugar industry of Barbados and other British West Indian islands have benefitted from the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement of 1951 which guaranteed Barbadian sugar access to a market at very favourable prices. In fact, one of the features of the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA) was the fact that very often the prices that British West Indian farmers got for their sugar were far above the world price. Sir, the International Sugar Agreement which dealt with world prices from 1937 was powerless to confront that reality.

Mr. President, the moment of realisation has now come. The CSA lasted until 1974 when Britain gained access to the European Community under the Treaty of Rome and LOME came into existence, went out a few years ago and there are now new arrangements and quotas in place.

Sir, the problem we now face is that the Barbadian sugar industry has not been able to meet very basic quotas. This once most precious jewel in the British crown is now not able to meet the most basic of quotas. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture made the valid point recently that this industry has had to compete for factors of production, land, labour and capital with other burgeoning industries and has not been getting the benefit of the competition. Sir, the result is that less land is available as tourism and construction lay legitimate claims to a lot of the land we have around.

Mr. President, I agree with Senator Chandler that for the purposes of construction and tourism there is adequate land around Barbados that should make it unnecessary for any more good arable agricultural land to be taken out of production. I am not optimistic about that because in 1995 this Government entered into an Investment Sector Reform Programme with the Inter American Development Bank. The policy letter was written by the Prime Minister on October 16, 1995, proclaiming the Government's acceptance of and subscription to a doctrine of land market efficiency meaning that land should be used to fulfill its highest economic purpose. Therefore, if the highest economic purpose can be fulfilled through tourism or construction so be it.

The industry has had to compete for the factor of production. Labour, as has been observed in the debate is now scarce. It has been observed and is an old argument that the disinclination of younger people to get involved in the industry is linked to the fact that for historical reasons, the industry has been associated in people's mind with the practice of slavery. Sir, in the 1960's the industry found itself having to import labour from places like St. Vincent and St. Lucia to keep itself on a sound footing. The economic reports of Barbados accept that credit to the agricultural sector is far lower than and inferior to credit to other sectors of the economy. I believe that I made this point in a previous debate in the Senate and Senator Griffith, at that time, said that while the commercial banks are not extending credit to agriculture at the same level as they extend to other sectors, there are other funds available from which the sector benefits but that does not gainsay the point that the sector does not benefit from the same level of credit than say, for example, the tourism sector and certainly the construction sector.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. President, we are dealing with an industry that is in desperate need of help. I did not hear the Leader of Government Business speech today but from listening to other speeches I have been able to distill that there is now a plan to move the focus of the industry away from sugar to sugar cane to develop a sugar cane industry rather than a sugar industry, emphasising the use of the sugar cane for a versatile range of purposes.

Mr. President, I am constrained to wish the Government well in this regard. I have grown accustomed to the catch phrases and slogans of the Barbados Labour Party and from sugar to sugar cane is now, perhaps, the slogan that will dominate agriculture for a while. I do not impugn the good intentions of the Honourable Minister. I think that he means well and I have said so in this Senate already but we will wait and see how far this catch phrase and this slogan carry us.

Sir, as far as the Resolution is concerned, it is clear that for its out-of-crop preparations the industry does need the money claimed. This is not the first occasion on which the Government is being called upon to guarantee a bond issue for the industry. This is now a fairly recurrent practise but all will agree that having regard to the role the industry has played historically and is playing even now in the country, this kind of investment is worthwhile but we have to confront the fact that the industry, as we have known it, is vanishing before our very eyes. I take St. Philip as, perhaps, my best cue that for all the factories I just named, there is not one sugar factory in St. Philip anymore and much of the agricultural land that I used to know, very arable land, has been since used for other purposes. The most recent is land at Groves Plantation, to the east of Emerald City, which was very good agricultural land used over the years for sugar production but now it is a housing development.

I do not know if after giving permission to develop that land that the Town and Country Planning Department can refuse permission to anybody else in Barbados to develop any land that they might want to develop.

Sir, I recall with nostalgic regret applying to the Chief Town Planner to get permission to cut off a piece of land at Marchfield, St. Philip to give a sibling and I was told that I could not subdivide it because it is good agricultural land but I have seen Groves Plantation land now being used for housing development.

Mr. President, the Democratic Labour Party does not have any major problem with this Resolution. I think that we have had a useful debate on the sugar industry and agriculture. I think Senator Lowe, my colleague, did the Senate and himself proud by the sterling contribution which he made to today's debate. I should like to publicly congratulate him for the incisiveness and certainly the eloquence of that contribution.

Mr. President, Senator Collymore and Senator Husbands raised the issue of food security in Barbados. Recently, the renowned literary giant Dr. George Lamming delivered the Earl Warner Lecture and made the point that Governments had promised support to farmers in Barbados while at the same time importing nearly $9 million in food, thus making sport at those farmers. I think that there is a lot to that criticism. We cannot speak about food security and developing our local agriculture while at the same time countenancing imports of food of the order which we countenance here in Barbados.

Unfortunately, in the neoliberal, political and economic ethos in which we now live, it may be very difficult to stop that kind of importation but that does not in anyway undermine the argument of Dr. Lamming that it is really a mockery of the farming community to talk about local food production while they have to compete with that order of food imports. I hope that the Minister of Agriculture, through the enthusiasm and goodwill which he has shown so far has some response to this unpleasant reality. Sir, having said all of that I do not think that I should delay the debate any longer.

Sir, this Resolution, in my view, serves a purpose which, as a Parliament, we cannot avoid at the present time and, therefore, I join other Senators and certainly support my colleague Senator Lowe in throwing our support behind this Resolution.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

SENATOR R.W. GRANT: Mr. President, I join with other Honourable Senators in supporting the Resolution before this Honourable Chamber which seeks to approve the guarantee by the Minister of Finance in the payment of principal and interest which are necessary for the redemption of bonds issued by the Barbados Agriculture Management Company Limited in the sum of $60 million for the purpose of financing the sugar industry.

Mr. President, as I listened to the debate today I could not help reflecting on my days as a young boy helping my great-uncle in Haggatt Hall with the canes. I remember playing in the trash, the cane harvesting, the cutting of the cane and the sucking of the cane.
6.30 p.m.

Sir, I have the good fortune of going to school in St. John and engaging in the use of sugar cane was for us, a part of our existence. It was not simply just a matter of going and getting some cane and getting the nutrients. I think they call it, Sir, *saccharum officinarum*, the Latin name for sugar cane but really what was happening is that we were ourselves engaging in part of the history of this country.

I think, Sir, from all that has been said, we will all accept that sugar has done a lot for the development of the Barbados economy. Senators referred to the time when sugar cane was introduced, as early as 1637. Senators referred to the fact that in the 18th Century, due to the fact that there was a great demand for sugar, out of England, the sugar industry in the West Indies expanded significantly. They were comments, as well, Mr. President, in relation to the fact that the development of the sector resulted from the African Slave Trade which would be the result of the demand in the 18th Century, for indentured as well as white slaves.

Sir, I want to share with you an anonymous, in relation to sugar. That quote is, Sir,

> "No commodity on the face of the earth has been rested from the soil or the seeds from the skies or from the bowels of the earth, with such misery and human blood as sugar."

I reflect on that quote, Sir, because as we discuss this Resolution and as we talk of the important role which sugar would have played in the development of the Barbadian economy, I think it is also very important that we recognise that as it relates to sugar, there has always been an aspect of pain. There has always been an aspect of some compromise. There has always been an aspect which has resulted in some exploitation of labour. There has always been some aspect which is required, such as financial support.

I think it is important, Mr. President, that we look at this issue in its correct historical context. I think it is important to recognise that this sugar, once referred to as white gold because of its economic importance was not only responsible for the way the economy of Barbados developed but for our population structure.

I think, Mr. President, that is very important because in a sense, it identifies for us, one of the reasons why this debate was, at times, emotional and caused many of us to reflect on the days when some may say that sugar was regarded as King. This sugar, Sir, was very important.

I say to you, Mr. President, that sugar cane continues to be important to the Barbados economy, in terms of providing foreign exchange, its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the jobs that it provides. I say to you, Mr. President, that we exist today in a world that is fundamentally and significantly different to when sugar cane was first introduced in 1637 when there were some 1 500 tonnes of sugar at the time being cultivated. You move, Sir, in 1957 to 200 000 tonnes, in 1965 to 205 000 tonnes, I say, Mr. President, that this is a significantly different time.

If we are therefore functioning at a time which is significantly different to what existed hundreds of years ago, I think it is important for us to recognise that we have to find other techniques and modes of ensuring that we sustain the sugar cane industry.

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture, the Leader of Government Business touched on a number of areas where this Government is seeking to ensure that we no longer simply focus on sugar production or the sugar industry but, we focus on the sugar cane industry. I think, Mr. President, that it is extremely important for us to recognise that, for our own development and growth, we have to look at the diversity of the sugar cane industry and enhancing efficiency in that industry.

Mr. President, many comments were made, particularly when Senator Lowe spoke, in relation to the decline of the Sugar Industry. In fact, Senator Lowe continually asked what has gone wrong with this industry. I say to you, Sir, the fact that these are different times and we have changing economic and social circumstances, this has contributed to the decline of the sugar industry.

There are alternative uses of land and labour and many Senators touched on the fact that other sectors also seek to have the use of land, whether it is the construction sector or the tourism sector. I remember well taking lunch for my great-uncle. I remember taking lunch to my great uncle in food carriers which contained good, locally-grown cooked foods and not fried. I remember him toiling in the fields. However, I remember the vision that existed amongst many

Barbadians of his era, seeking to ensure that their children did not have to work in the fields as they had done.
6.40 p.m.

Mr. President, I am saying this to educate because opportunities have been created for those of us who are descendants of the slaves, or descendants of the plantation workers. One of the things that we have to accept is the fact that many of us were encouraged to seek fortunes outside of the agricultural sector. That is a fact, and part of it relates to the history.

Mr. President, another reason relates to the fact that with the cultivation of the sugar crops, the land provided lower yields and at the same time the cost of production continued to increase. Another factor relates to the fact that there have been movements in the rate exchange. As you know, our dollar is tied to the United States of America's dollar and the fluctuations between that currency and the European currency would have also impacted on the sugar industry.

Mr. President, I mention these things because I do not consider it necessary today to hold a strong political line. If I were going to do that, I would be tempted to speak of a former Democratic Labour Party's Government agricultural policy. I know that Senator Stuart wants me to speak on it but I am going to stay on track here. Sir, I heard much talk coming this morning from the Honourable Senator Lowe, continually saying that something is wrong, continually talking about the fact that the production of sugar was constantly declining, as if suggesting that it was a particular Government which has sought the demise of the sector.

Mr. President, I would want to say that as one looks at the statistics, they reflect that for the period 1986, the figures show that 111 000 tons of sugar was produced. By l987, it fell to 83 000; by l988, it fell to 80 000; by l989, it fell to 66 000. Sir, it has continually declined, therefore, I am not going to seek to hold a political line. If I did that, I would have to communicate to this Honourable Chamber the fact that it was a Democratic Labour Party Government which, through its policies, has caused significant difficulties for the sugar industry.

Asides.

SENATOR R. W. GRANT: I have seen the light, that is true. I do not deny that at all. I believe that others too will see the light. I pray for them.

Mr. President, I think that it is appropriate to consider a sugar cane industry, as opposed to a sugar industry because what we need to do is to ensure that we can efficiently utilise the resources which we have.

I have listened to all Honourable Senators and we all have accepted that sugar production as presently exists, will not be able to contribute in a positive way to the continued growth and development of our country. Therefore, we need to have a restructuring and a repositioning of the industry. We need to restructure significantly to ensure that we can properly utilise our resources, and that we can utilise the product and by-products of sugar cane, in areas where there is the potential of added value. At the same time, we need to ensure that we can strengthen the linkages between the sugar cane industry and the other sectors of the economy, particularly tourism, energy and culture.

Mr. President, the point has to be made that in this changing and dynamic world environment, we have to keep apace. We have to be able to face the challenges that confront us in relation to globalisation and trade liberalisation but that as we face those challenges, we also have a responsibility to exploit the opportunities. Sir, very often persons focus on the challenges without identifying the opportunities.

Mr. President, it is very clear from the presentation of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Honourable Leader of Government Business, that this Barbados Labour Party Government has a very clear vision as to where we want to take the sugar cane industry. I am happy to have heard Senator Doctor Lowe praising the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.
6.50 p.m.

Sir, the Honourable Member in his presentation spoke with great passion, and commitment about the sugar industry to ensure that we are able to move from a sugar industry, which is on the decline, to a sugar cane industry by re-engineering and restructuring to assist in revitalising and further developing this economy through a sugar cane industry. Sir, diversification and efficiency are critical elements in ensuring that we are able to utilise and get the most out of our resources.

Mr. President, there was also discussion on intellectual property. We need to develop intellectual property for the use of sugar cane and its product in the context of value-added products because this is extremely important. We have to ensure that as we transform the industry that we are constantly adding value.

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture touched on a number of things we can do to transform the industry and I do not propose to go through them again but it is important that we not only look at sugar but at electricity and specialised chemicals like ethanol. Sir, there is a role for sugar cane and it is important for us to

recognise the challenges which the sugar industry faces and work together to ensure the success of the sugar cane industry by playing a non-partisan role.

Mr. President, I heard reference to the calypso *"Sugar Made Us Free"*. I have reflected on the fact that there was a time when sugar was referred to as White Gold but times have changed and it is no longer referred to in that way but we must not allow ourselves to be trapped in time.

Sir, Senator Lowe spoke about the farmer's role in the development of the industry and how people were being removed from it and I asked myself whether Senator Lowe was reflecting on the same global environment on which I reflected.

Sir, I started my presentation by saying that the industry was important in relation to the number of jobs which it provided even though some people said that sugar and agriculture are dead but this Government continues to commit itself to development of the agricultural sector because we have a commitment to ensure that we maintain levels of employment.

Mr. President, we also have a commitment not to mislead Barbadians but to share with them the realities of what is happening in this new global environment. Sir, we must not make statements to suggest that farmers are being left behind because the restructuring of the sugar industry, focusing on diversification and products of value would also ensure employment as well.

Mr. President, I fully and wholeheartedly support this Resolution.

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, we have had a useful and constructive debate. I wish to thank all Senators for their various contributions. I have taken careful note of their suggestions and will bear them in mind. I think it would be appropriate for me to respond to a number of the issues raised by respective Senators.

Sir, I do not know what were the problems of the former Ministry of Agriculture to whom Senator Chandler referred but I have been in the Ministry for more than one year and have not experienced any challenges. I have the full cooperation of the senior staff in the Ministry with whom I interact on a daily basis and I leave them to deal with their junior staff. The senior staff is all fully committed and maybe this is because I have spent my entire life as a public servant.

Sir, I will say now that if I had taken note of some of the criticism made by Ministers, I might have stopped working too. My approach is different and even if I encounter difficulties with the staff, I do not deal with it in the public but on a one-to-one basis because part of my responsibility is to provide direction for the staff. I must confess publicly that so far I have been very pleased. Sir, that is not to say that there may not be people in the Ministry who are not pulling their weight but I do not have the challenges that others might have experienced because if I had those challenges I would not be telling you about some of the things that are happening in the Ministry now. The ideas come from the people in the Ministry and the farmers. The ideas do not originate with me, they originate with them but I give them the opportunity to bring their ideas. I think that we are going to surprise a lot of people and that is all I am going to say at this time. Sir, you would notice that I keep saying we. You seldom hear me say I. You hear me say we in the Ministry of Agriculture and that is because we are working as a team in the Ministry of Agriculture.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. President, in another two weeks the Ministry of Agriculture will be having their scientific conference at Sherbourne where members of the staff will be presenting papers on work that they are doing. Contrary to popular view, a lot of work has been happening in the Ministry of Agriculture for years. Sir, that is not to say that there have been some shortcomings but things are happening in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. President, they all accept that their mission is to improve the delivery of service to the farmers. A month ago we launched a new website to which farmers can log on. There is information on the aspect of the work of the Ministry and advice for farmers and that is a source that the farmers can use.

Sir, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation is in the process of finalising an information system about marketing intelligence. One of the long discussions which we had in Trinidad last week was on the Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED), which is a network to provide marketing intelligence throughout the region.

Sir, we are doing our work quietly. I have never been a person of a lot of talk. Mr. President, people who know me sometimes interpret that to think that I am a fool because I keep quiet but we are doing work quietly and the work would speak for itself in due course.

Sir, with respect to the concerns raised about the lack of speed with which some things are happening, I would say that a business plan was developed for the restructuring of the sugar industry and a number of things have been identified. Sir, from my experience I agree that it is okay

to note these things. For example, there is reference to the project to do with using the compost to make board and that was done when the Uplands trial was done. Mr. Tilby brought samples to me from Canada as a result of further research he has done over the years on that, since Uplands.

Sir, it does not mean that because you can make board from compost that a project making board in Barbados is going to be a viable project. Work has to be done to establish what would be a profitable project, taking into account the amount that would be needed in Barbados and whether that is enough to produce a reasonable return. Sir, if the local market is not enough, where will we send it? Can we then compete with Brazil who can produce the same board from the same compost? Can we compete with Mauritius? Feasibility studies have to be done on a number of these things. It is not simple, because the author of the report puts it in the report as a possibility that the people are going to put money into such a project.

Mr. President, when I went to the opening of the sugar conference the gentleman from Mauritius spoke to me at length and offered to share his experiences with Barbados in a number of areas - the making of ethanol and other things. Sir, this gentleman is from the private sector and the sugar sector in Mauritius is driven by the private sector. I cannot believe that this gentleman sat at that meeting for a whole week with a room full of private sector people and since my return to Barbados none of them have come to me with any proposals to invest any money in any of the projects, that is the issue.

Mr. President, all of this work is being done by the Government, so it is easy for the people who are not putting any money in this project to find fault with the speed at which things are happening. They are not bringing forward any money as Mauritius has done and that is the interesting thing.

Nevertheless, it is because the Government recognises that this is work that has to be done. I will repeat what I said earlier. All of us know that the involvement of the Government in the managing of the sugar industry only happened since 1993. It was being managed before by the private sector. Senator Stuart made reference to the fact that over the years, the industry has always suffered from the lack of investment by the very persons who were reaping results from it and that is still happening.

Sir, in response to the issue being raised by the Senator, we in the Ministry through the Ministry of Economic Affairs put a proposal to the European Union. It is not that we do not know how to approach the European Union. I was the National Authorising Officer for many years for the European Union projects in the region, including Barbados, and I know how that process works.

Sir, about this same time next year I may still be talking with the European Union. Mr. President, because a proposal is put to the European Union does not mean that the European Union will respond to you next week. If we want to talk about bureaucracy, we only have to deal with the European Union and we would see what bureaucracy is. It is not that we are not aware of what is happening.

Sir, last week when I was in Trinidad I spoke with Carl Greenidge who was the Minister of Finance in Guyana and who now works with CTA, which is an arm set up by the European Union to deal with the development of projects in the African, Caribbean and Pacific about funding for a number of these things that we are talking about, and he has expressed a willingness to assist and I am dealing with that.

Sir, I am also looking at other resources. The Friday before I left to go to Trinidad I met with the Prime Minister in his capacity as Minister of Finance and spoke at length with him about funding for a number of aspects of the work that we are talking about. We came to an understanding on it and he gave instructions to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, who was present at that meeting, to follow up on other issues. These are not things that I would normally talk about. I will wait until they bear fruit.

Sir, the point is, you must not assume that we are not doing anything because we are not making a noise. It would be premature to speak about them before we start to see any fruit.

Suffice to say that we in the Ministry are sure how we are going to proceed and we are proceeding. Perhaps, in the not too distant future we will see some of the results.

On the issue of the functioning of the Barbados Agriculture Management Company, as I indicated earlier, these funds which we are dealing with are for the day-to-day operations of the factories and the plantations. The issue of the late start of the crop which was raised is well taken. The instruction which the management of the company has given to the managers of the factories is that by Christmas, when the workers go on Christmas recess, the factories must be ready to start.

During the last set of negotiations we were able to get an agreement with the union for a two-year contract. So, the issue of any negotiation with the union has been taken care of already and the person responsible for the maintenance of the factory has to get that done in time. I take the point that we need to make sure we start early.

7.10 p.m.

I will now deal with a few of the issues raised by Senator Lowe. We accept that water is an issue. When

we talk with the farming community, they will tell us two things that are of major concerns to them. One is water and the other is the high cost of inputs.

In relation to the inputs, we have been urging them to get involved in cooperative movements, similar to what Senator Eastmond spoke about. We have reached some success but that is a slow process because of people wanting to control everything, and each one thinks that the other will benefit too much, if they get involved. This is a process we are working on and there is already some success that is coming from that, through some arrangements which the BAS will be making, but I will leave the BAS to deal with that and make their statement in due course.

Last Monday, the Rural Development Commission started a workshop at the SJPP. This week-long seminar, was with a gentleman from Dominica who is a master builder, making cement water storage tanks, using wire and steel. Each tank can hold about 1 800 gallons of water.

We are training 20 people, including a number of youngsters who are on the agricultural programme at the SJPP, with whom we in the Ministry have an ongoing relationship. The Ministry gives them workshop assignments periodically with extension officers and other areas in the Ministry, as part of their training.

A number of them are in that programme along with persons from the BYC. The idea is that we want these 20 persons to serve, in the future, as trainers of other persons who were not on the programme.

The objective behind teaching people to construct these tanks, is that they are relatively cheap, compared with what they would have had to pay to import a similar size tank, and we want to encourage these farmers to capture water from their farm buildings. If they have a greenhouse, a shed, a poultry pen, their residence or whatever, they can capture and store that water, as a means of providing water for their activities.

We, in the Ministry have developed a programme for the management and development of water for agriculture. We acknowledge that water is an essential ingredient and in the present circumstances, we cannot rely on what is happening at the Barbados Water Authority, if commercial agriculture is to be provided with water. Therefore, we have developed this plan.

When I visited the Scotland District some months ago, it happened to rain that day and as I drove through Belleplaine going to Greenland, I saw gallons of water coming down from the hills and going straight into the sea. When I got to Greenland, the dam that the farmers were using at Greenland had gone dry.

Now, it is not possible to divert that water down to the dam at Greenland. The point is that we are looking at the creation of additional dams in that area to capture some, if not all, of the water that now goes into the sea. At present, we are doing it elsewhere. The day when I visited the farmers to whom Senator Lowe referred just now, one of the things I discussed with them was the creation of a dam to capture some of the water coming down from the hills, and now running into the sea, in addition to the use of the wells. They drew to my attention that there is a large deposit of brackish water in that area. We are identifying those sources and in due course we will be moving towards trying to get that water into the distribution system for irrigation.

We are looking at other areas. As we go into other areas, they become more complex. For example, the question of treating the outflows from the sewerage system to the level where the water can be used for agricultural purposes. What that will require eventually is the establishment of a distribution system, separate and distinct from anything that now exists, so as we get into that, we are talking about more expensive propositions. These are things we are looking at, in terms of developing a water plan for agriculture.

With respect to the environmental issue which Senator Lowe referred, I give him the assurance, and he can give it to the farmers, that a few weeks ago, the President of the agency which is responsible for the problem, at his request met with me. We discussed it and he has given me the assurance that the issue of compensation is one which they will accept. Therefore, Senator Lowe can assure the farmers that we are keeping in touch and, in due course, we will make sure that they get some compensation for the product. The President has accepted it so there is not going to be an issue.

However, I did ask him not to go to the farmers themselves but leave us to deal with the farmers, because we want to make sure that he does not go and do something that he should not do. The point is that he has accepted that they have to take responsibility for that matter.

I agree with those Senators who have made the point that we need to deal with the issue of the use of technology. When we started the workshop on Monday about the construction of the ferro cement tanks, we promised those who were present that as soon as that project was completed, we were going to start a workshop dealing with the use of hydrophonic and greenhouse techniques.

Yesterday morning, a farmer came to see me. I must say, while it may be true that there are numbers of young persons who may not have an interest in agriculture, I have been pleased to note that there are a number of youngsters,

those at the SJPP, who come to the Ministry and work with the Ministry, but there are others.

Recently, I met with the Youth in Agriculture. I invited them to come. When they came, I was surprised to discover that the institution which assisted them in setting up the organisation did not help them to develop any plan. We have set about working with them and developing a plan, and they can, in turn, invite their comrades and friends. This group, the Youth in Agriculture, is committed. They are young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years old.

We are also working with the 4-H Movement. The objective there is to get these youngsters familiar with the technology because we do not believe that they are going to be attracted to the agriculture using a hoe and fork as their main tools. Yes, they will have to use a hoe and fork at some point in time but we think that they need to become experts at using the new technology.

Sir, only yesterday morning, a young farmer came to see me. I have known him for a long time. The farm is in St. Philip. There are about three different parcels of land that he farms. He specialises to some extent in growing tomatoes. When he came to see me yesterday, he indicated to me that the recent heavy rains are creating a problem for his tomatoes, and wanted to find out if there is anyway that the Ministry could assist him with the establishment of a greenhouse.
7.20 p.m.

We have explained to him how we could assist him and how we would work with him. Sir, the important thing is that he brought with him a gentleman who I had known for a number of years, who was one of the pioneers in hydroponics and greenhouse technology in Barbados. Sir, by the end of our conversation, that gentleman had offered to be one of the resource persons in the workshop about which I have just spoken, and we were planning to train farmers to use those techniques.

Sir, there are now two persons in Barbados who use the greenhouse technology on a large scale. One of them is very receptive to persons coming to see what is happening, while the other, who has received a lot of assistance from the Ministry when he was setting up, objects to anybody visiting his greenhouse. Sir, a number of farmers have complained to me and we have already put plans in place for a workshop to train farmers in the area of greenhouse technology.

Mr. President, a few months ago when I met with the Israeli Ambassador, one of the things he said to me was that they have learnt how to get a lot out of a little. He meant small areas of land, lack of water, *et cetera*. That is exactly what we need to do in many instances. There are some cases where there is no need to have a field of 40 acres, one might be able to do quite a lot in a controlled environment such as a greenhouse. Therefore, we are going to try to do our best to spread the technology among the farming community, especially the young farmers because we are now in the process of putting in place a chapter on farmers of the future. These are the youngsters who we feel will be the persons who are to take over farming in the future. Therefore, they must be familiar and up to date with farming technology if they are to be successful.

Mr. President, the issue of land use is one of which we in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are fully aware, and in the draft Sustainable Bill which is being prepared, we have made reference to issues of water management, good practices, land use, *et cetera*. Although I do not propose to speak too much about the draft Physical Development Plan, I know that there is a chapter dealing with land use as well.

Mr. President, we have worked out the amount of land which we think is necessary to do all of the things that we have spoken about. Sir, a number of the things that can be done, for example, the root crops which we spoke about earlier are rotation crops around sugar. Senator Lowe was correct when he made reference to the fact that people would plant root crops between the sugar cane, so that those crops would have matured before the sugar cane and one would have gotten revenue from them while the sugar cane was growing.

Sir, we have worked out the amount of land that is necessary to do these things and our position is quite simple. Ultimately a decision would have to be made by the Government and the public. I have listened very carefully to what Senator Barker was saying. Ultimately Barbados would have to decide how it would use its resources.

Mr. President, if anyone were to ask me for advice, I would say that we need to strike a balance and work out carefully what we would do and in which area. I would never recommend that we should put all of our eggs into one basket.

Mr. President, there is the issue of the involvement of small farming, and I agree. There has been a decline in the amount of land that the small farmer has put in sugar, which, in fact, has virtually disappeared. That is something which I think would only come back when we have worked out a number of these projects of which I speak, so that the small farmers could see that there are benefits in becoming involved. What I can now say is that there are at least six small farmers who have planted cotton during the last crop, and I am happy to say that the person who has gotten the highest yield per acre, 2000 pounds, is a small farmer

from New Castle, St. John. He has put all of the others to shame, so to speak. That is because he took advice from the Ministry and was able to do what the others have not been able to do.

Mr. President, as more and more persons see that there are possibilities, they will come back in. We are actively trying to encourage small farmers to get into cotton because it is clear now that a profit can be made from it. At the moment the price for Sea Island cotton is good, and contrary to what Senator Barker has said, it is not one of the best, it is the best. It now fetches the highest price on the world's market. The nearest to that is the Egyptian cotton which fetches just under half of what we fetch per pound for West Indian Sea Island cotton. This is something of which we have to take full advantage. I am very pleased to see the progress that the company has made and I am sure that it will continue to make even greater progress, as we now expand the acreage under cotton.

Mr. President, with reference to crops such as broccoli, special lettuce, *et cetera*, which the hotel sector needs, are all ideal crops for greenhouse technology. I have a proposal from a young farmer in St. Andrew who wants to grow a number of these products in a greenhouse which he plans to construct. Therefore, there are things happening in the area of agriculture that overtime will make the difference to the sector.

Mr. President, with respect to the operations of the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited, I do not want anyone to miss the point I am making, which is about the financing that we are speaking about today. This is not to go into any of those projects about which I spoke, which is the out-of-crop operations at the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited. Those projects are being dealt with separately but what we are saying is that we need to transform the industry.

Mr. President, even now there are discussions taking place on the sale of branded sugar. Sometime ago when I met with some of the sugar producers, there was one of them who was very vocal. From the time he came to the meeting to the time he left, he was in a negative mood and kept asking me why we could not have sold the branded sugar at that time

.

Sir, I told him that we had a number of offers from persons living in the United Kingdom who wanted to enter join ventures with the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited, to deal with the sale of branded sugar and that we did not have any offers from any of the domestic producers, including him.

What I have said to the Barbados Agricultural Management Company Limited is to talk to those farmers but also give me a proposal about how it could be done without those outside companies being involved because there was nothing which prevented them from coming to us with an offer in the same way in which an Englishman has done.

Mr. President, part of the problem that we have, is that persons are very quick to say how slowly we are moving, as if there is something which prevents them from becoming involved and doing it themselves. The Government is doing it because the private sector did not do it. We are doing the developmental work to provide the private sector with the information, as we did in the case with cotton, to let them know that it is a viable proposition from which they can make money. The private sector took it in the case of cotton but after the work was done by the Government and we are doing the same thing now with the sugar industry.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. President, it is not the intention of the Government to get involved in the activities once the developmental work is done because we hope that the private sector would take it on. Sir, if persons feel that we are going too slow, we welcome their involvement and will allow them to take it over and give them the necessary support. Sir, we are proceeding with this in the best interest of the country and the private sector is free to come on board.

Mr. President, the issue of land for the landless was raised by Senator Lowe. We are proceeding with this project and with the analysis of the agro products that are imported. Senator Stuart made reference to a statement made by the gentleman and I want to give two examples.

We have just imported 2.6 million pounds of beef. I have a proposal from a group for the establishment of a beef feed lot and received a letter yesterday giving an update of this. It is their intention to have 1 000 head of cattle because that is the level that would allow them to make a decent return but it will not produce 2.6 million pounds of beef.

Sir, when I met with the land producers, I discovered that supermarkets alone required 115 carcasses per week and a number of hotels require varying amounts but the industry as whole is only producing 64 carcasses. I have asked the industry to show me a plan of how they can move from 64 up to what the supermarkets and hotels require and then show me another plan of how they could move beyond 64 by encouraging people to take more.

Mr. President, it is not always the case that Government is allowing activity to take place which will keep out people. I have given two instances to show that there is a huge demand to be filled and we are meeting in the Ministry with groups to get them to come up with plans as to how they will carry their respective sub-sectors

forward. Sir, we need to get them to the point where they can meet local demand. While I take the point the gentleman made, it is not correct to put it as if in every instance the Government is allowing these things to happen.

Sir, the system in which we work is one in which people have free choice and it is difficult to tell people about national projects and interest because they make their living by importing, selling and making profit on these items. Sir, they could go to Brazil, buy it for nothing, and then 'make a killing on it' so we have to deal with this issue. Sir, in spite of this, there are opportunities for the local producers to get a part of the import bill and we are encouraging them to do this.

Mr. President, I thank all Honourable Members of the Senate for allowing me to respond. I look forward to the time when we in this Senate will have the time to look at agriculture in general and people will discover that more is happening than they imagine even though some things may be lagging behind.

Sir, it is our intention to get some things fixed well before we move on the others. We are working on all fronts but it would take the entire evening to talk about the things on which the Ministry of Agriculture is working.

I thank you.

Sir, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be adjourned *sine die.*

The question that the Senate do now adjourn sine die was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.
7.36 p.m.

CONTENTS

MINUTES

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Wednesday, June 23, 2004 at 11.00 a.m.

PAPERS

Senator the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH 1

1. Annual Report of the Barbados National Oil Company Limited for the year 2002 to 2003.

2. Annual Reports of the Barbados Tourism Authority for the years 1999 to 2000 and 2000 to 2001.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Senator the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH 1

INTRODUCTION OF BUSINESS

Senator the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH 1

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 2 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE BY THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR FINANCE OF THE PAYMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST NECESSARY FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE BONDS TO BE ISSUED BY THE BARBADOS AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT CO. LTD. IN THE SUM OF BDS$60 MILLION FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINANCING THE SUGAR INDUSTRY 2

Senator the Hon. E. R. Griffith, 2; Senator Dr. D. S. Lowe, 9; Senator Dr. F. L. Chandler, 16;Senator G. P. B. Nicholls, 19; Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard, 22; Senator T. E. Barker, 23, 24; Senator the Very Reverand H. E. Crichlow, 25; Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia Symmonds, 26; Senator B. R. Collymore, 27; Senator the Hon. L. V. Eastmond, 29; Senator Miss S. C. V. Husbands, 32; Senator I. St. C. Linton, 36; Senator Miss P. E. Parris, 38; Senator F. J. Stuart, 39; Senator R. W. Grant, 42; Senator the Hon. E. R. Griffith, 44.

SUSPENSIONS 15, 24

ADJOURNMENT 49

Senator the Hon. E. R. Griffith, 49;

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BARKER, Senator T. E.
CHANDLER, Senator Dr. F. L.
COLLYMORE, Senator B. R.
CRICHLOW, Senator the Reverend H. E.
EASTMOND, Senator the Hon. Miss L. V.
GOLLOP, His Honour Senator Sir Fred
GODDARD, Senator Sir John Stanley
GRANT, Senator R. W.
GRIFFITH, Senator the Hon. E. R.
HUSBANDS, Senator Miss S. C. V.
LINTON, Senator I. St. C.
LOWE, Senator Dr. D. S.
NICHOLLS, Senator G. P. B.
PARRIS, Senator Miss P. E.
STUART, Senator F. J.
SYMMONDS, Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia