

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. James North.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Speaker, this debate brings into focus, not only the financial divisions which are being made for governance in Barbados in the coming twelve months but it also brings into focus the state of our national economy which signals where this Government wants to take this country.

Both the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East were careful, Mr. Speaker, not only to outline a number of programmes which the Government deems necessary for the further development of Barbados but were also expressing the view that there is, with the Barbados economy, a level of confidence such that Barbadians can take comfort in the fact that this Government has been doing its utmost to plan for the further development of our country.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East in particular highlighted a number of factors pertinent to the economy that suggest the economy is in good shape

H26:

1000 a.m

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10:00 a.m.

Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Speaker, when it is necessary to examine the true state of health of an economy, one looks at a host of things, such as levels of unemployment, levels of inflation, levels of foreign reserves, and investor confidence. Therefore, bearing in mind what we know of the Government's achievements in the area of management of the economy, every indication is that in the foreseeable future, the types of

expectations that we have of our performance as an economy, are well founded.

Permit me though, Mr. Speaker, to mention particular aspects of the Estimates which are of great importance. We have often heard the charge that when it comes to the structure of our economy, this Government has not done enough to develop a stronger structure or to modernise the economy but, nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at this Government's commitment to developing the evolving small business sector you would, no doubt, realise that our commitment to using small businesses, both to provide self employment for persons, and at the same time to encourage them to assert themselves in the economy is such that, again this year, we are providing \$350 000 to the Small Business Association to encourage them to get their members on board, in this whole drive for the development of small businesses. This is but only one aspect of our commitment to new forms of economy that this Government is trying its utmost to foster.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at some developments that will be occurring in Barbados down the road, I should perhaps mention one particular area for which I have responsibility and explain to this House, precisely, how important is this particular area.

Some years ago, the CARICOM heads of Government took the decision that in every CARICOM country, there should be a programme of funding for technical and vocational education, with the aim that by the time the free movement of labour was to take place, there would be persons in every CARICOM country able to move freely in CARICOM with qualifications which would be uniform qualifications in every CARICOM country. Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to develop this point better.

I am saying that CARICOM was the institution that suggested years ago that we should have a novel approach to technical, vocational, educational training and, in Barbados, we established the Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET) Council around 1993. Sir, in the very near future, the TVET Council will be following Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, in respect of the introduction of national, vocational qualifications.

I am advised, Mr. Speaker, that within the last two weeks, the TVET Council met with its attorneys for the purpose of developing regulations that will impact further on technical, vocational, educational training, and also with the proposed national vocational qualifications.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for this is that there are persons all through the Caribbean, including persons in Barbados, who function in given careers and demonstrate a measure of competence but, traditionally, have not been certified. The policies of technical, educational, vocational training, as enunciated and introduced by the TVET Council of Barbados, will be moving towards a situation where artisans, carpenters, masons and plumbers, while working, will be certified for being competent to practice both in Barbados and in the wider CARICOM region.

Already Jamaica through its HEART Programme and Trinidad and Tobago through its TVET Programme, have introduced regulations by which persons who are the recipients of training opportunities through TVET type operations have been certified, and we in Barbados are following that concept. In fact, Mr. Speaker, every CARICOM country is expected so to follow. The idea being that

over time, our citizens who occupy the blue collar careers, will be able to move through the region, showing not just normal practical competence, but also showing some proof of being certified, to be able to pursue their careers.

Historically, Mr. Speaker, we have in the Caribbean situation, instances where people were able to work and demonstrate tremendous skill and competence but who did not have any form of diploma or certificate to really prove their worth.

The culture of the Caribbean, to date, Mr. Speaker, is that irrespective of how good you are as a practitioner, unless you can show that you have some sort of certificate, you really do not receive the recognition and respect that you ought to receive.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that through a CARICOM initiative, we have come to the position where we are about to grant diplomas and certificates to persons who, while on the job, would have been able to learn job-derived skills, develop competencies and who would be able to function in the world of work.

I am further saying, Mr. Speaker, that within the next financial year, it is expected that the first phase of the introduction of national vocational educational qualifications will be complete. Already the Scottish Examinations Board has been working closely with the TVET Council to ensure that the Council itself is a recipient of the technical expertise, and would benefit from the types of systems necessary to get this Programme going. Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can back track slightly to make the point I am making clearer.

Time was, Mr. Speaker, when many a Member of Parliament would have expressed some doubt as to what TVET really was about. I vividly recall between 1993 and 1999, many a Member of Parliament would ask, what is this thing called TVET, we hear about technical educational vocational training but we do not know what it is, and how it works.

Mr. Speaker, the Technical Vocational Educational Training Council which is the Board of Directors, oversees the programmes of the TVET Council. The TVET Council identifies employers whose employees are in need of training. TVET itself, does not set up the training but it funds training programmes, so if, Mr. Speaker, Employer A had 10 or 15 employees who were in need of training, but Employer A was not financially able to fund training for these people, Employer A would approach the TVET Council.

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Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

The TVET Council and Employer A would then work together on a training programme where the Council would fund the employer or assist the employer in financing that training programme for his employees.

Mr. Speaker, beyond this, the TVET Council is committed to the policy that when it funds these training programmes that those who benefitted from them would be in a position to work to make a contribution towards national development. The TVET council is also committed to a process which will start within the next year to ensure that those who are trained are recognised and are given paper qualifications to prove their training. Mr. Speaker, this is one of the initiatives that will come from my Ministry within the next 12 months.

Mr. Speaker, also in respect of activities proposed in my Ministry is that in circumstances where the Barbadian worker has been identified as truly productive worker we are getting approaches from North America and from Canada in particular where employers outside of the traditional agricultural employers are having meetings with us in Barbados, the aim being to recruit Barbadian workers to work in hotels and in the nontraditional areas. This is now two years that we have established a programme where Barbadians can go to Canada to work in the hotels. Mr. Speaker, as our workforce there performs properly and really takes the good name of Barbados forward, indications are that down the road we will be having more opportunities for more Barbadians to work in the hospitality area and other areas in North America.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that there are Honourable Members who would question where is the legislative programme of the Ministry especially since some pieces of legislation have been mooted and have been proposed going back decades. Mr. Speaker, as you well know the Government of Barbados is part of a tripartite process where on the successful launch of our social partnership we have a policy on labour related matters by which employers, Government and employees representatives hold a number of consultations to ensure a measure of consensus achieved through social dialogue so that policies impacting on labour and on employment would receive the blessing of three parties as opposed to one.

Mr. Speaker, as Honourable Members query where the legislation of the Ministry of Labour is heading, I must report that in recent times we have been having more and more dialogue with both the employers and the workers organisations. Mr. Speaker, it is anticipated that in the coming financial year at least two or three major pieces of legislation should be ready for the consideration of this Parliament. I want to mention that, Mr. Speaker, as particular programmes within my Ministry which would come to the attention of this Parliament and to the wider society in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, much as I am extremely delighted to stand here today and support the Estimates as proposed for the financial year 2004-2005, I must say that I do not quite understand the attitude and the signals coming from the other side in relation to these Estimates as to the state of our economy. I take it that in circumstances where the indices in the economy are suggesting good health for the economy that my opponents on the other side either do not understand how well the economy is doing or are saying that Barbados is at such a state as for them to be skeptical as to how well this economy will do in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, I heard one or two innovative suggestions coming from the other side and I will comment on one which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy raised but which he did not take the time to explain properly. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy having heard the Honourable Member for St. Peter say that our tourism has reached a mature stage, appeared to be suggesting that community tourism is the way forward. Mr. Speaker, even though an argument can be made that community tourism would

see a measure of integration between the cultures of the tourist coming here and our own local culture, at the end of the day the Honourable Member for St. Lucy owes this Parliament an explanation as to how community tourism would impact both on local revenues and the degree to which it can add incrementally to the earning of foreign exchange. He omitted to mention these things and to that extent he owes this Honourable House an explanation. Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to propose a given policy, but it is another to leave Honourable Members hanging and doubtful as to what the policy entails.

Mr. Speaker, until the Honourable Member for St. Lucy can analyze and break down his proposal in respect of how beneficial community tourism would be, I am saying that would not qualify him to take any exception to the excellent efforts made by this Government to do our best taking into account the mature state of the tourism industry and the constraints attendant to this particular state.

Mr. Speaker, all told, my own view is that these Estimates correctly take into account where this country is at the moment and what particular activities and programmes should be encouraged in the near future for the further development of Barbados and correctly contemplate an approach by which fiscal prudence will be the norm. Mr. Speaker, I propose to take part in this debate this week when we come to the heads so I would not now isolate and identify the very many activities and programmes about which I propose to speak about later this week.

Mr. Speaker, a country the size of Barbados, taking into account both our limited resources and the fact that the management of our balance of payments and the fact that fiscal prudence should always be encouraged would require any Government to ensure that the type of financial programme it proposes for the country is a programme that takes into account the reality of the country's needs while at the same time developing policies and programmes that would inure to the benefit of the country.

Mr. Speaker, there are those in the population who sometimes show impatience when they need things in their communities and do not see them coming right away. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that very often it is the question of identifying the priorities and working them. If every single need of every single Barbadian was to be met in the short term it would have severe implications for the level of spending and ultimately for the means by which Government raises the finance that would put Government in a position to spend. This Barbados Labour Party Government in its ten years of life has not gone down as a party given to excessively high levels of taxation.

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Continuation of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND:

We know that taxation is the principal source by which Government's revenue can be raised. We also recognise that to tax a country too heavily, would reduce the purchasing power of the average person and at the same time put Government in a position where there would be pressure on Government to establish systems by which such taxation would be managed.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that this Barbados Labour Party Government has not been overtaxing Barbadians but has recognised that based on the amount of revenue available to it, there are particular programmes which are necessary to get Barbados going, and at the same time, in terms of the overall economic position, recognises that one of the critical means of ensuring the best possible financial management is the question of the degree to which the debt of the country is managed.

Sir, bearing in mind our stated policy to reduce the deficit, I am saying that in keeping the deficit to a manageable size is a sure signal that we do not propose to allow the debt to gallop out of control and ultimately we would then see problems such as balance of payments and pressures on our foreign reserves.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I am heartened that this Parliament could have learnt yesterday that our reserves stand at approximately \$2 billion or six months' import cover. Time was in this country's affairs, 15 or 20 years ago, when even the best of politicians were of the view that three months' import cover was desirable and was the best that could have been had for the country Barbados. Sir, today this Government can report that we have in excess of six months' import cover and that in terms of our reserves, the country's economic health is sound and all indications are that in the near future, this economy would take off.

Mr. Speaker, with these remarks, I bring my pained presentation to a close. I am not feeling well, I have a bad fever, with a loss of appetite and so I have decided to put in my intervention now because I might have to seek leave of the Leader of Government Business to take some rest today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to speak in this debate. Surely I am not having a loss of appetite and, therefore, believe that I am eating very well.

Mr. Speaker, coming out of this week's presentation by the Honourable Prime Minister all of us should, indeed, be happy and feel secured that we are in good hands. Sir, as the Honourable Member for St. James North has pointed out, the reserves are in good shape and employment is at an acceptable standard, although we have noticed that though unemployment is about 10 per cent, with most persons working there are still a number of them who need training. Therefore, in these Estimates, we see that the Barbados Training Board, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, the Barbados Community College and the University of the West Indies (UWI) are getting a big percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Mr. Speaker, I believe that more and more Barbadians

should be trained because it is essential that persons should move beyond the poverty stage. I am happy to see that this Government has maintained, over the last 10 years, a fairly sizeable percentage of our budget to help provide training at the lower level. We have doubled the intake at the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and are seeing more and more students being accommodated at the University of the West Indies (UWI). I believe that the Leader of the

Opposition is always quick to point out during debates in this Honourable House that more money is being spent in training for the female population than for males. He had a concern that we need to do something about the male population. Sir, a lot of work is being done, not only from civil society but from the educational system, in helping to address the concerns that he has.

Mr. Speaker, my main focus today, however, is to look at what has happened over the last 10 years in relation to the Government's performance in the portfolio which I now hold. Sir, since 1997, a number of initiatives have begun with us seeing the second World Bank Road Rehabilitation Project, which saw us setting about refocusing and reshaping a number of roads in our country. In fact, that project has set out to rehabilitate, to resurface and to reseal more than 302 km of roads in Barbados. Most of this project has been completed with 6.1 km completed; 79.1 km of overlay; 150 km of resealing; 67 km of routine maintenance, and an improvement in sections, bridges and culverts were completed.

Mr. Speaker, this Road Rehabilitation Project which was presented to the Parliament sometime ago, was awarded to the Rayside Groups of Companies in the sum of \$9.1 million. The Road Rehabilitation overlay package from the Turnpike, St. George, to Massiah Street, St. John was completed. Work was also completed in the Black Rock/Spring Garden area; Oistins to Wilcox; Newton to Maxwell; and Top Rock, Christ Church.

We also saw Road Rehabilitation overlay Package (B) which is still in progress. These roads were started in 1997 and involve the civil works component, relocation of housing, consultancy services and relocation of utilities services. In 1998, these projects had set out to cost the Government \$12.2 million. Package (B) which includes Highway N, Rock Hall to Crane, St. Philip; Walkers, St. George to Mapp Hill, St. Michael; Trents, Highway C to Highway 2A, Orange Hill, St. James.

This phrase was awarded to C.O. Williams Construction Company at a cost of \$12.1 million in 1998. However, due to a number of unforeseen problems such as the relocation of homes and relocation of utilities poles and services, it now costs the Government in excess of \$58.9 million. This large revised figure is due to a number of new initiatives which had to be undertaken.

H:No. 25 (53)1030 a.m.

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Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

For example when we started the overlay at the Dash Valley/Walkers Road, bridges had to be constructed and a number of houses had to be relocated that we did not foresee. In St. Philip, the St. Martin's School is still in the roadway and this has to be completed in the next phase. We are finding a number of difficulties in this project because over 85 homes were affected. Sir, so far we have relocated and upgraded more than 40 homes on this project and another 54 houses across the country need to be sorted out. Government intends over the next few years to provide homes for those people affected by the World Bank project in the country who do not have adequate housing. Mr. Speaker, we will bring a supplementary to this House later this week in order to accommodate some of these people.

Sir, this Government in the last term provided \$10 million to buy machinery for the depots. Having met with the technical officer and various officers of the Ministry, we are convinced that a lot of work is being done across the country. I am also convinced that today we have better roads than before. There are 103 000 vehicles on the roads.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that the \$10 million spent has been able to give all the depots backhoes and all other equipment. To be truthful, we are yet to feel that \$10 million at the depot in St. Lucy and we look forward to the day when we will get bobcats, backhoe and a roller to complete the work in St. Lucy.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Speaker, I have said before that I am convinced that more work is being done at the thirteen depots across the country. Sir, St. Lucy has the best depot in the island. We have equipped all the depots with basic machinery, a bobcat, roller, spraying equipment and....

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. We are yet to get a roller at the depot in St. Lucy because it has been broken down for more than two years.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Sir, I am convinced that at the depot level a lot of work is happening and we are also planning to look at the work on tenantry roads which was stopped a few years ago. In this year's Estimates \$1 million has been allocated to help repair tenantry roads. We recognise that there are long tenantry roads in the country that are in need of repair. We also recognise that we need to do more to rehabilitate roads in the area of St. Michael. Hindsbury Road which leads to Bank Hall and Bush Hall is in dire need of rehabilitation. It has swollen because of the mixture that was used over time and this year we will upgrade that road.

The Ministry has plans to upgrade Hindsbury Road passing by Barbados Workers' Union and up by the Globe. Sir, the original plan was affecting more than fifty-six houses in Hindsbury Road and we have taken the decision that we do not intend to dislocate persons unnecessarily and went back to the drawing board. The option has been provided to the Ministry that we might have to look at an asphalt concrete rain-course or an overlay which is less costly and less disruptive at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that a number of major initiatives and roads are being looked at across the country in these Estimates. For example, Charles Duncan O'Neale Highway which runs from St. Lucy to Greenland, St. Andrew through Farley Hill, St. Peter is in bad shape especially the Farley junction and needs to be repaired. We will be looking at that as well as the Hindsbury Road project in these Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, we are also looking at Highway 7 from Bay Street to Oistins. We have started an overlay by the Esplanade which runs to the bottom of the Garrison Hill. In the second phase, we will continue from the Garrison Hill to Hastings. In the third phase, work will be done from Worthing to Maxwell Hill.

I do not intend to spend much time on the Bridgetown Road Project because it will be completed at the end of April this year. Sir, that road is over 7.345 kilometers of road. It has made a difference to Bridgetown and helped to improve the traffic circulation in the inner and outer corners of greater Bridgetown. There are improved sidewalks, junction improvement, traffic lights, improved drainage and relocation of utilities. I want to speak about traffic lights. Mr. Speaker, so far we seen traffic lights at the White Park/Country road junction. We have also seen traffic lights at Baxters roads which have helped people who want to bypass inner Bridgetown.

H25/10:40

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

Mr. Speaker, we have noticed the improved conditions now that the road is completed and it will be officially opened at the end of April 2004.

Mr. Speaker, as far as drainage is concerned, we identified over 3 500 that were in need of cleaning. During the rainy season flooding occurs in the low-lying areas and sometimes in the parish of St. George. Sir, money is being allocated in these Estimates for ongoing cleaning, remedial work and the canalisation of certain programmes. For example, we were able to complete the canal at Headley's Land at a cost of \$3.5 million. This has helped to improve the area. We have continued to debush areas across the country. We believe that if we start the debushing in the dry season that this would help to prevent flooding during the rainy season. It is expected that a larger area will be cleaned because we have started earlier and it is hoped that will see improvement this year along Highway 1 as this area is prone to flooding.

I also want to speak about a major initiative that will come on stream this year. The road at Martindales Road is expected to start any time now. It was delayed over the last two years because we were trying to complete the Bridgetown road programme and we did not want to repair all the road in Bridgetown at the same time so we had to reschedule a number of roads. However, the Martindales road is expected to start within a few weeks. The cost of this project is \$607 000.00 and it will be approximately 700 metres. We will be trying to resurface the road but we may have to close that road when work is being done for a little while.

Mr. Speaker, I must say from the outset that we must be looking at a vehicle restriction on the Martindales Road. I understand that over 22,000 vehicles now use that road per day. We also have a number of route taxis, Transport Board buses and private vehicles using that corridor and it is estimated that when we close this road, we may have to reroute a number of the vehicles now using the River Terminal.

In addition, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital may be planning to expand a property on Martindales Road. It is expected that the Enmore site may be expanded as part of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We are proposing one-way traffic from Taylor Gap to the Edna Walters roundabout.

Mr. Speaker, this means that we may very well have to use the Pine/Belleville area to reroute a number of private sector vehicles. We may also have to reroute vehicles from the Collymore Rock area. Most of the route taxis at the Constitution River Terminal may have to turn at Nursery Drive and go down St. Michael's Row and turn onto the Charles Duncan O'Neale Bridge. We are looking at doing a rerouting of vehicles to avoid the use of Martindales Road.

Sir, it will be a very costly exercise and dislocation, but we are doing it in the interest of the public. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been complaining for many years that vehicles traveling along Martindales Road blow their horns and that this road has deteriorated. We will also be doing work in this area as well.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the initiative of the Martindales Road, we are also looking at the road at Green Hill. The Green Hill road is also in bad condition and the Deputy Prime Minister has been asking for many years to upgrade that area. Some work has been done in the Codrington area and we are now looking at a side walk programme from Codrington up to the ABC Highway.

Sir, we have noticed that public sector vehicles using the corridor coming from Jackson would stop to the west of the Polyclinic and this action has caused a lot disruption in that area. We have to improve the junction in that area. A number of persons have complained that during the day there is a lot of disruption in this area. Sir, we have tried in many ways to accommodate businesses in that area by conducting any road works at night and not during peak hours. I believe that we may have to do most of the work at night or on weekends because this road is one of the busiest roads in Barbados. The road at Collymore Rock also has to be upgraded.

We have to be willing to do things by trial and error. Many people complain when there are restrictions in some areas in Barbados but in most developed countries there are many areas where we can only make a left turn on the highway. We are now becoming a developed society and we have to behave as though we are a developed society. We cannot have 104 000 vehicles on the road and expect to cross a highway.

Asides.

H25: 10.50

Sequence 55

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10:50 a.m.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

I want to give the assurance to the public that we will continue to do our best to ensure that you spend the minimum time on the road, getting from one destination to another.

Mr. Speaker, during the year of these Estimates, we will look at the Licencing Authority. We have, so far, planned to introduce plastic licences this year. The process is far advanced, and we are hoping that we can conclude our discussions with the Ministry of Finance, in order to introduce the plastic licences.

It is also envisaged, Mr. Speaker, that during the year, we will bring to Parliament, a number of Bills in order to upgrade and improve traffic legislation in this country. The Highway Act will be discussed during the current financial year. We will also introduce the Traffic Amendment Act, as well as the Building Code, during the year. We are hoping that when that Act is proclaimed, we can have a regulatory framework in place to help improve the buildings in our country. Although we have not had any major hurricanes, we have seen that most of our people are building according to some specified code, but we want to introduce it in order to help bring more modernization to our country.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, I believe that these Estimates have been helpful to the Ministry of Public Works and we have seen that a number of new initiatives are coming on stream. I believe that more roads would be built this year, and through the initiatives that we have taken the depots would go back to helping the constituencies and that the plan to help, in terms of the Licencing Authority and the Electrical Department, more work will be done in terms of erecting more street lights and traffic lights across the country.

I believe that when we come to the Head, I would be able to explain in detail, what is happening at the various levels within the department.

I thank you.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to make my contribution to this debate and I have to say that I do not think there is anybody more happy than I am today to see that fiscal reform is at the top of the agenda, in the Ministry of Finance.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I am hearing, soto voce, after nine years but I am talking about after 28 years.

When I first came into this House in 1976, I was young and green, the only woman in here and although I have to say that I was not aware that anyone patronised me in anyway, people did look at me rather strangely when I questioned the way in which we did our business.

We would first do our Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue in mid March, as we are today and that somewhere in April, and over the years it went as far down as October, you would then do your Budget. I never understood it. I thought it was the other way around that you would do your Budget and you would set out your plan and then you would say, now this is how I expect expenditure will go in the course of this Budget or in the course of business under this Budget and these are the revenues that I would expect to garner.

Therefore, when the Prime Minister yesterday described the process of accounting and budgeting as

fossilised, limited, highly centralised, this would have come, I think, mostly at a time when the Democratic Labour Party was in governance. There are the centralisers. In the Barbados Labour Party, we tend to be the decentralisers, but we take the services out to the people. It is they, who when they are in Government, tend to centralise everything.

The Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter described the process as focussed on central Government, only to the exclusion of a whole host of new agencies which have evolved over time. I am very pleased. The Prime Minister described it as fossilised. I was thinking Medieval, but perhaps that might be a little harsh, maybe Victorian. I think that is more apt, because these are systems that were brought to us, even before Independence, which we have culled from the Westminster System, and continued to use even though at Westminster they have modernised and have moved away from a lot of these systems.

Therefore, I am very delighted, Sir, and have good reason to believe, having spoken to the Clerk of this Assembly, that the relevant research has been done and that, indeed, it is entirely possible that draft Standing Orders could be ready for the next meeting of the Management Commission of Parliament. I would like to urge upon Your Honour that you would summon a meeting of the Management Commission of this Parliament at the earliest opportunity, so that we may indeed get on with the business, so I am calling for a meeting.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I must also reflect on some of what the Prime Minister has said, that although the processes and the fiscal system and framework does not now suit a post independent Barbados, it is still true and fair to say that in its time, it served us well. It was a vehicle for the astonishing, and how I wish, Mr. Speaker, that people would be writing to this, astonishing, marvelous, quite social revolution, which took place in this Barbados over a pre and a post Independence period in our lives.

Therefore, the infrastructure of modern Barbados, yes, does indeed have much to thank the old fiscal system for but the time for change is very much at hand and the Prime Minister was right to say that 2004 is going to be a watershed year.

Mr. Speaker, I say it often, both inside and outside of this Chamber that life is about choice and change. Change is upon us and we were wise in this country, in earlier administrations to make early choices which stand us in good stead today and will continue to do so, in these early years of the Twenty-first Century.

We have already chosen what are now described as the new sectors in our economy.

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Continuation of Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

We have chosen to become a member of the World Trade Organisation which is a membership driven, rules-based entity. The implications of our membership to the World Trade Organisation are enormous

for 2004 as a watershed year and indeed for the way in which we do our business and the way in which we trade for the foreseeable future. Those implications are enormous and import great change. I am very pleased that the Minister of Finance has been consistent. In a very early speech in 1995 soon after he became Prime Minister - he became Prime Minister in 1994 - he spoke of the need for us to find new ways of doing old things and new ways of doing new things. That meant that we had to learn to adapt and that we do not just buy into new things simply because they were new, but had to be tailored to what was in Barbados' best strategic interest, so he is being consistent. His presentation yesterday spoke to that and to fiscal reform which is imminent. So we are finding new ways now of doing old things not only because the World Trade Organisation will demand it in many spheres but because we have always tried to put ourselves in a position so that when the moment of change arrives we would not be surprised but would be ready. Mr. Speaker, if you look back over the 375 odd years you would see this is as part of the secret of the success of this 14 x 21 island.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that Barbados will continue to be unapologetic in its upliftment of the social sectors was music to my ears. As a young Minister, my first portfolio was health and my second education. In those years I was the only woman in this House and in the Cabinet and it galled me to hear people saying that the women are given the soft portfolios, but those portfolios, health, education and housing were the largest portfolios and they still are today.

The monumental investment that successive administrations both sides of this House over the last 60 years have made in those sectors has built and created that platform from which came the human resource base that we speak of today. That does not happen overnight or at the end of a five-year or a ten-year plan. This is 60 years of investment on which we draw today. I remember the temptations. The international financial institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund, took a different view and if they had their way we would have had to cut back on those sectors. So it galled me, Mr. Speaker, because it seemed to me that there was a lack of understanding that the so-called social sectors underpin the so-called productive sectors, but they are productive sectors. They produced the workforce of which we are so proud today, the workforce upon which the success of Barbados has been dependent and the workforce now upon which these new sectors in our economy must draw very heavily. It surprises people outside of Barbados because those sectors, health, education, housing and training, do not enjoy the percentage of revenue that they do in Barbados. I believe that we spend more on education than we do on any other sector of the economy, and I think the second after that would be health. You only have to look at the draft Estimates in your hand, Mr. Speaker. It pleases me because it satisfies me that we are on track and I am glad that I am still serving in this Parliament when these reforms are taking place and when the priorities continue to be rightly placed.

Mr. Speaker, I well remember that there was one doubtful moment in a Democratic Labour Party administration when it seemed, urged by the International Monetary Fund, that we might have gone off course. So the people of this country removed the Government at mid-term. This is the first time that has happened, but it most probably would not be the last because the people of Barbados, like the electorate everywhere in democratically-run parliamentary democracies, reserve that right and they exercise it from time to time. This happened at a time when the International Monetary Fund was threatening that we should hike up rents and that we should put in place user fees. These were euphemisms for all kinds of social dislocation that I think would have changed the way in which democratic socialist governments in Barbados have done business even before independence, but the people of Barbados put a quick stop to that.

Mr. Speaker, fiscal policy as was stated yesterday has been used in this country as a tool for social development. We have done well to the point where we could possibly become victims of our own success in those sectors of health, education, housing and training. I think that the Minister of the Finance is correct when he said that we now have to review entitlements as we have come to know them because a number of other important indices have changed in Barbados not the least of which is the population pyramid of Barbados. The way in which we would do work in the future is changing now in the world, but in my view too slowly in Barbados. We are still sticking to an eight-hour day that is fixed in certain time blocks. We live in a tropical country and when the sun rises and it is cool people who work outside, as the sugar workers have always done, do not work by the clock but by the sun. When the sun is up they go out in the cool. When it is hot, they finished their day's work.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about absenteeism and lack of productivity in recent times.

House 25 Sequence 57

11:10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, it is good that this is on the public discussion agenda in Barbados but we will work differently. People will not work in the same job for 33 1/3 years and go home with a pension in the way they have done in the latter years of the 20th Century. That is not going to happen much longer in the 21st Century.

Sir, the way in which we bring new thinking, the way in which we harness the new technologies for the delivery of these services, to which we have become accustomed, and which we want to continue having access to, the time for this to happen is now. Our population is an ageing population. We have a health profile that resembles that of a developed, rather than a developing country, which has been so for many years. There are implications for pension reforms.

Sir, let us face it, we have invested so much in health, education, housing, et cetera, to a point where life expectancy in Barbados is what one would expect in a developed country. The life expectancy is 78 years for women and 76 for men. By the year 2010, it might be 80 years for women or even higher. Sir, we are programmed to live to 80. How can we do that and imagine that we continue having people pensioned off between 55 and 65? That does not make business sense because one should make investments from the cradle to the grave.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados is one of the few countries in the world where education and health at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, are free of cost. We are proud of this and make a monumental investment in it. We then have to see how best we would use the dividends from that investment, therefore, we have to be more prepared, more creative and inventive about how we adapt, how we adopt,

how we retool and how we reinvent.

Mr. Speaker, if I may speak to the impact that an accelerated trade liberalisation will have on Barbados, and it will, we must not be in any doubt about it. I do not think that we must be led astray by persons within or outside of this region, who would suggest that this is something that we can abdicate or opt out of. We cannot. The price for that is unthinkable. I cannot imagine that anyone would want this as a vision for the 21st Century. We want to be part of the 800 000 000 market, the US\$15 trillion market in the Free Trade Area of the Americas. We want to have access to the developed countries' markets but under the principle of reciprocity, we understand that they too must have access to ours.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be very careful about the pace and scope of these three theatres of negotiations in which we are engaged, even in the Single Market and Single Economy in the Caribbean, we have to be very careful about the pace and scope.

I do not think that I will ever forget. In a meeting at Cancun last year, I was sitting next to my counterpart, the Trade Minister of Namibia and, Sir, with tear-filled eyes, he was explaining that in his country, they had liberalised too fast and too soon, at the bidding of others and now they had nothing. That is a graphic illustration but we do have to be very careful at the pace and scope.

We are in a hemisphere, we are one of the 34 countries with two major developed countries among us, the United States of America and Canada, but there are a number of highly industrialised developing countries that would like to compare themselves on par with us. Sir, by no stretch of the imagination could Brazil be compared with Barbados, just as in fairness Barbados and Dominica cannot be on par. Chile and Argentina are described as being in a lumped-together fashion as the developing countries of the world but those countries are part of the newly evolved G-21, the more highly industrialised of developing countries.

Mr. Speaker, we, together with similar like-minded countries in CARICOM, are trying to make a case for special and differential treatment for smaller economies such as ours. We are doing this in all of the theatres of negotiations. Sir, I keep making the point, even in CARICOM we give special and differential treatment to the less developed countries. I am speaking with particular reference to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, in the Free Trade Area of the Americas, in the European Theatre and in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The reality is that some of the developed countries are more kindly disposed to offering us special and differentiating treatment than others. The Europeans with whom we have done business historically, in a very concessionary preferential kind of arrangement, I would like to think that they are more kindly disposed because that has been the nature. Those special preferential arrangements which we have been the beneficiary of over the years, were special and preferential treatment for us, although we must not overstate what we have gotten out of the relationship with Europe over the years.

Sir, people speak or almost romanticise the relationship together with the African and Pacific States that the Caribbean has enjoyed with Europe over a period of 27 years with the Four Lome' Conventions. We are now seeking to negotiate a different kind of trading arrangement with the Europeans, what we are describing as an economic partnership agreement, and the Caribbean as a region hopes to launch with Europe on 16th April, 2004.

H:No. 25(58)1120 a.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

The African region has already launched theirs and the Pacific will launch theirs later in the year.

Sir, it is very important to understand that the LOME Convention dealt only with commodities. In the case of Barbados it was sugar; in Guyana, it was rice and sugar; in the OECS; it was bananas and in the case of Jamaica, it was bananas and sugar. Sir, there was nothing else in trade for them to point at and for the first time we have to negotiate with Europe.

Sir, it is also a changing Europe which will enlarge beginning May 1st when ten new countries will come into the European Union and most of those ten countries are developing countries.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to be looking carefully, just as the Europeans are looking over our shoulders in CARICOM, to see what we are giving away in the Free Trade Area of the Americas because what we give to the other countries we have to give to them. We will also be looking over their shoulders to see what they are going to give by way of special differential treatment to the new entrants to the European Union. Indeed, many of the older European memberships will be looking to see what specialised and differential treatment will be given to these new entrants.

Sir, in the WTO the status quo is not much removed. As was stated yesterday, there is a built-in agenda and agriculture and services, both of which are key to us, continue to be negotiated. The reality is that after the stall at Cancun, there is now a mantra being chanted in capitals of the world that 2004 must not be a lost year. Sir, even then we have to look underneath what people are saying because the United States of America's Chief Negotiator and Trade Representative, Mr. Robert Zellick will demit office at the end of this year, so is the Commissioner for Trade in the European Commission and they do not want to walk away empty-handed. Sir, they have a special and personal interest in the negotiations at the WTO to restart. We all want to see it restarted and there is now existing a concession that those negotiations should restart. I would like to think that Barbados is well-poised whenever these negotiations are kick-started during the course of this year, one would hope. Barbados at this time finds itself at the WTO chairing a committee on trade and development. This is a high honour that has come to us and something we will share with the other CARICOM countries which have representation at Geneva.

Sir, this stalled agenda is critical because agriculture is key to the majority of developing countries of the world. We belong to the G-90 which are the smaller economies and the UN designated least developed countries. For the majority of these countries agriculture is critical and it is in fact the make or break?

Sir, agriculture is also critical in the developed world because Mr. Bush and those engaged in the electoral process this year in the United States of America do not want to tell their constituents, many of who are rural, that domestic support and export subsidies will be cut. It is essential that if we are going to restart these negotiations, that the United States of America will have to look at its foreign bill and be

serious as to what it brings to the table in respect of its cut in domestic support, just as the European will, in respect of export subsidies.

Sir, Europe is saying that it is ready. We have not heard from the Japanese and others in respect of market access but, suffice it to say, people are talking to each other and it is a good thing. I really believe that it is possible for the broken-down trade negotiating committee talks and discussions in the FTAA which is now rescheduled for April to arrive at compromise and go forward.

Sir, in 2004 a deadline was set for the FTAA to come into being but it is clear that we are not going to come to closure by December 31st, 2004. Even if the process goes into 2005, it is not the end of the world but it is in our interest that we should go slowly to allow countries like ourselves to be better prepared because we are severely under-resourced. Sir, for us in the developing world, particularly the smaller economy, it is okay to sign on but to implement it is another 'kettle of fish' altogether. There is a long-term cost associated with it and this is why the implementation issues are key to what small economies like Barbados agree to. Sir, 2004 can be a watershed year, particularly in matters to do with trade.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, it is not the Government that trades but the private sector. I am proud that in all the delegations going to trade negotiating meetings, training and in an advisory mode, we seek to accredit to the Barbados delegation, members of the labour movements and the private sector. I am pleased that the Minister of Finance is offering more in this financial year to help to fast-forward the trade team. I am sure they will welcome this further assistance.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be challenged. We have to be more competitive and this can be a whole subject on its own. I have no doubt that the Honourable Member for St. James Central who is very much involved at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade will speak to the interface we have with the private sector and the one we will have with all sectors of Barbados in terms of educating people as to what this process is about.

H25/11:30

Sequence 50

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of... Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

I keep saying every time I speak to this Honourable House that reciprocity will be the order of the day and you cannot be successful in that regard unless you are competitive.

Sir, I would like say, as I close my remarks, that I am positive - the Minister of Finance said yesterday that agriculture and manufacturing must build world-class enterprises. I think that once we can identify the niches that we want to carve out in this globalised and trade liberalised world, we can reach up and build world-class enterprises. I think that excellence can inform all of the sectors of our economy. Sir, I

think so and I am convinced of it because we have done it in the past. If we have done it in the past, I cannot think of any reason why a successful Barbados cannot do it in the future.

Sir, we did it in cricket, you will notice that I used the past tense and I am hoping that I am going to the future tense with that.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, we did it in cricket, excellence. We did it in tourism, excellence. We did it in education, excellence. Sir, everywhere in the world excellence is the word that people apply to the Barbados products in those areas of endeavour. We have also done it with our National Drug Service. Sir, the list is a long but I see that you signaled me that my time is up.

Sir, we have cornered a market share in the past and I am satisfied that once we keep our wits about us, once we are clear and we are speaking with one voice in CARICOM, that we can and we will corner a market share for the future.

I thank you.

Mr. R. D. JONES:

Mr. Speaker, the story is told of a man by the name of Saul, those who recognised the reference, had a certain disputable character. He was walking ostensibly on the road to Damascus and he had a conversion. He was filled understandably with the Spirit of God and he recanted all previous forms of behaviour and was converted. In that conversion his name was changed from Saul to Paul.

Aside.

Mr. R. D. JONES:

Therefore, when I listened yesterday, recognising the wondrous works of Christ, the son of God, I applauded most definitively the conversion of our dear beloved Prime Minister from his previous posturings into one which I gave some applaud. Mr. Speaker, what we do in this Parliament and in other places like the Cabinet and in the Ministries impact quite definitively and substantially on our people, how they survive, how they feel about us, how they feel about themselves, how they feel about others in their space and others across the wider world.

Sir, it is not an issue of 300 pages of well prepared statistics. We have bright people in the Ministry of Finance, budget analysis et cetera, and from time immemorial they have been setting excellent records for us to refer to but this is only a part of the total process of governance and how we seek to involve and sensitise our people in what we do and how we look to manage the affairs that within a democratic society they have entrusted to our care.

Sir, if democracy is of the people, by the people and for the people, we are nothing else but conduits. We are nothing else than messengers on behalf of the people. Therefore, the issue of governance, when we speak to all of these matters, when we bring legislation to this House, when we pass that legislation, whatever we do in here we should be doing on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, what we do in here should elevate them out of, sometimes, the ignorance of their minds. I use the word ignorance in the true meaning of that word. It is about involving them in their society and economy. It is about giving them more than a hand up. It is about setting the road and path which will make true citizens worthy of contributing to the development of Barbados.

Therefore, we have to encourage, provide the right type of leadership, the right type of motivation, use the notion of inclusion in its true sense, including all the people of Barbados in discussions in arriving at given conclusions for the management of themselves and the management of the Barbadian society.

Therefore, today and yesterday we are entrusted with that charge.

Sir, the point raised on this side by the Leader of the Opposition responding to the issue to how we spend money - I am not one, Mr. Speaker, who is caught up with issues like above, below or outside the line. All monies in this country belong to the people of Barbados and must be used for the benefit of the people of Barbados.

The Parliament is charged with dealing with how we use that money to benefit them, that must be the charge of Parliament. Therefore, it is refreshing for the Right Honourable Prime Minister to recognise and speak of issues of fiscal reform and for that to be sounded by others on the other side who mimic the Right Honourable Prime Minister, but we want to move beyond that mimicking. We want to move to a situation where the actual reality happens.

Sir, there would not be any quarrel from this side on issues such as this. It is not that \$400 millions should not have been spent because it would be foolhardy to suggest to a Government that we should not spend the people's money on the people's business, that would be stupid.

Sir, the quarrel is the manner in which that money was taken and used. I would hope that in the future, as we search for meaning in an extremely difficult world, that the Barbados Labour Party Government would take those of us on this side but generally the people of Barbados in their confidence, who by their very act, placed confidence in them in May 2003.

H25:

1140 a.m.

Sequence 60

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

11:40 a.m.

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES:

Mr. Speaker, if the people were able to do that, albeit with the kinds of faces which came before them,

because every piece of cloth in the store has its buyer, I stand not to contradict their actions. I want the Barbados Labour Party administration now to reach out to all and sundry - whatever the size of our population, maybe 265 or 280, figures fluctuate from time to time - and include them in matters of governance, in matters of state, in matters of society, in matters of economy because, at the end of the day, it is on their behalf, on whom we act.

Mr. Speaker, for several weeks, I found myself agonising as to how I should approach the issue of St. Leonard's School. This is an issue of governance and I want to say at the outset, I compliment whomever it is that asked the Auditor General to look specifically at St. Leonard's and what has been happening there. Compliments to all of them. Whoever wants to wear that bangle around their necks, I give it to them.

Mr. Speaker, I will not go into the broad details of this because time now does not allow for it. It is a document of the House. It is a terrible agony, Sir, what happened at the St. Leonard's school where persons were involved in construction that left the mind boggled, where the management of a process was so terrible that even now, caused those who would want to say that this is not the way to do things, to say it quite loudly.

Sir, those who used to teach chemistry or math, could now chime but this is no mock sport. This is the people's money. It is not mine, it does not belong to the Representative of St. George North or the Representative of St. Thomas, it belongs to the people of Barbados and if we are making an issue of governance, this is also central to that process.

Therefore, all of the bluffs and blunders and oversights, I use the word oversights advisably, must be done with. I know the Honourable Member for Christ Church East inherited this calamity but it is now his challenge. It is now his duty. It is now his responsibility to ensure that all of the issues contained herein are speedily addressed and that resolution can come to this process.

I do not say that to the Honourable Member for Christ Church East with any acclaim or whatever. It is just a simple form of advice because the people deserve better in what we do and what we say in this Parliament. Therefore, if I would beg that, as they go through the process of rectifying and getting those funds which have obviously not been delivered, US\$12.2 million that we have not been able to access, because so many things went wrong that if the process is cleaned up, we would be able to access it and actually have the draw down from the Caribbean Development Bank to facilitate other aspects of development in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Honourable Member will respond and perform the task as requested from This Side. What frightens me though, Mr. Speaker, nevertheless, is the almost silence of a society who must be aware of what is taking place in our country. Sir, outside the voices of a few, maybe the motivated few, the other persons remain silent, caught up, Mr. Speaker, correctly in managing their domestic affairs, in trying to eke out a living out of a hostile society, both domestically and internationally. They are trying to feed their families, Mr. Speaker, trying to get shelter over their heads, and therefore, might not be persuaded that issues such as this, should capture their attention and galvanise action from them. Sir, we call and we would continue to call for action from This Side, and for the appropriate type of governance to be applied to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, issues of governance will impact on what happens in each and every constituency that we say, we represent. They will impact, Sir, on the quality of the roads which we walk, ride or drive on. They will impact on the amount of natural gas which is delivered to the homes in Barbados, and how many others are added to the national grid.

They will impact, Mr. Speaker, on the transportation, how we move our people from our homes to their places of work or to their places of leisure. It will impact on housing, how we are able to shelter our people. It will impact, Sir, on our overall environment, and on so many other things in our country.

It will affect how I am able to interface, Mr. Speaker, with you and all others on the constituents of your particular area, what you are able to say to them when they ask you about a road, either in Church Hill or in Windy Ridge or in parts of Kingsland or in Wilson Village or in Lodge Road B. It impacts on all that.

Mr. Speaker, I am a teacher, and those on the Other Side who want to be taught should come before the feet of good teachers like me and the Speaker, rather than be making irrational noises. Listen, you will learn. He needs to be taught and if the strap was present, he should come and kneel and be strapped properly for unnecessary behaviour.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Honourable Member has one minute more.

Mr. R. D. JONES:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am making the point that all of what they impact on the people, in a direct way. What the National Housing Corporation is seeking to do, impacts on the people in a very direct way. How they are able to gain the resources to purchase what they want and on how others are able to secure a piece of land to place a structure to house themselves and their families. This is our charge.

Mr. Speaker, nothing else is our charge, and regardless of how 'powerful foolish' we are, at the end of the day, when it is all boiled down, our only charge is to improve the quality of life of our people and nothing else. It has nothing to do with who becomes a millionaire by whatever means necessary or unnecessary, but how we provide service to them.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. George North speaking about issues of roads, and I am not one who would say that you are not doing enough. You might not be doing enough, therefore, encouragement should be given so that you would do more and bring relief to people.

House 25, sequence 61, 11:

5014

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES:

There are people in Barbados who still have to walk through cart roads and bush to get to their homes. In this the 21st century, this must cease. There must be an accelerated programme for providing paved roads and resources must be placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to do that. Sir, we want a definitive timetable. We do not want any dancing on the issue where the Minister cannot recognise when the road is going to start from the bottom of Bay Street and get up to the Garrison Hill and things of that ilk. Nevertheless, we recognise that some work has commenced and some work would continue, but we need acceleration of the process to bring the people from behind the bush into the light so that they can walk, ride or drive to get to church, to town, to Moon Town, to Six Roads and most definitely to get to Oistins on weekends. We want those things to be done for them. We do not only want the gloss on the main thoroughfares because the people who live in the tenancies in St. Philip, Christ Church, St. Lucy and wherever they live in this country need to have the same benefits as all others, therefore that acceleration must take place.

Mr. Speaker, I agonise as I move around Barbados to see what I call the almost desecration of our landscape. Recently, I was travelling going towards the airport where I notice the Barbados Oil Terminals was putting down some facility on what used to be Fairy Valley Plantation, an area that I know well. As I look, I had to ask myself what is happening here now because I remember, with the kind gesture of the plantation manager in those days, using canes from that field to satisfy an occasional hunger or an occasional desire for sweetness. I am not saying that there is anything wrong with development but I feel that we are just chopping up and mashing up the total landscape of Barbados. It seems unplanned to me.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a bunch of greedy people who see the land of Barbados with one eye and wants to see how fat they can get their pockets out of chopping it up and delivering it in a speculative way, but we will not live on Mars. Regardless of what NASA does, we will live on earth, we will live in Barbados. Therefore, rational approaches to what we do with our landscape must be encouraged. This is not a condemnation of the Town and Country Planning Department or of those who sit. I believe sometimes we do not understand our true connection to mother earth and therefore we chop, cut and desecrate. We need to change our building standards and our building styles. We cannot keep expanding outward. Every country needs to have some space to grow something even if it is a bonavist vine. Those who buy their peas out of a can better understand that we cooked our rice in earlier days with excellent peas like the bonavist. Therefore, we must leave space for the production of our crops, our vegetables and our fruits. It is a disgrace what is happening. That is about governance, it is not about a compendium of statistics.

Mr. Speaker, I - and I am saying I because I do not want to blame anybody else - also have a difficulty with the notion of economic democracy or economic enfranchisement in this country. Too many Barbadians - and I give them no colour - are left out of the goods and services and the ownership in this country. I quarrel not over the ones who have been able to gain but they must not block those who are seeking to get as well. Therefore, we need to have the establishment of a financial institution in this country which is managed and owned by the people for the people so that they too can get into the process of ownership. It is not easy now to buy a share in Barbados in anything. It is already corded off, but we need not take from those who have. What we need to do is to mobilize our knowledge, our training, our education and our initiative. We act as though we are on bended knees always and therefore when an individual raises his foot, it collides either in his face or in any other place that you

might think painful.

Therefore, the establishment of a people's fund - and I not talking about \$1 million, \$2 million, \$3 million or \$4 million... We need to utilize the resources of the credit union movement of this country which stand now at over \$600 million to provide small loans at concessional rates for all of the members of the credit union movement which is over 120 000 people to get into that enterprise and if they have extra surplus somewhere they can invest it in that as well and let the people manage that. Mr. Speaker, if we are to advance in the 21st century it is important to make more and more of our people shareholders in their own economy not only consumers of their economy who go and spend the few cents they earn somewhere. They should be able to use some of whatever they can get to help benefit themselves now and future generations of their family. It is important that this happens. It is important that all men and women of the same mind and of the same focus galvanize towards this kind of action.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we are caught up in Barbados now with all the issues of globalisation. Therefore, we are having this coming together in so-called large entities relative to Barbadian standards, but somehow I see the unraveling of a lot of this. Only yesterday or a few days ago we went ahead and got rid of the last bank with any direct association with Barbados. I am calling, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Barbados, with the support of Government, to re-establish the people's bank of Barbados. The few little odd cents that we have on this side we will put in it, so the people's bank of Barbados must be reestablished, no quarters asked, none given.

House 25 Sequence 62

12:00 noon

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES:

Mr. Speaker, we are making sport in these countries. We cannot sell the head and the belly, some must be left for soup. Head and belly soup has made our people strong in the past, so do not let them sell off the head and belly, we need to leave some for our people.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, I have a severe difficulty with the sale of public goods and services to a private sector, which is unwilling to take chances or risks but which relies on the acquisition of business entities, after taxpayers' dollars and efforts have made them viable. If an individual wants to eat proper pork, he or she has to take care of the pig by feeding it properly and by having the correct butcher do the killing and cutting up. Do not only take the meat at the stage at which it has been fattened and then sell it. I believe that we have business people who need to go through a mental shift, relative to what they are doing in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the private sector and of Government agencies must be symbiotic for the development of Barbados but if one sector sits back and waits on the calf to get fat and like the prodigal son, then return home and ate of the meat, only to be told: "Thou good son, welcome." That must stop. They must become more adventurous in the delivery of goods and services to the people of Barbados, the region and the world. They must wake up, rather than be in a stupefied mentality that seems to characterise their actions and behavior. Sir, this is not a condemnation but an encouragement.

Mr. Speaker, I would also encourage the Government to assist where necessary, as they have been doing overtime but I do not believe that the governance of Barbados has been well served by the private sector of Barbados. Therefore, if we are expected to march together, we must therefore, link our arms together with each party, understanding where we want to go, how we want to take this country forward, and then insert it solidly into the global economy, while recognising the benefits which should come to those workers who sweat and labour on the behalf of the private economy, for the elevation and delivery of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this very important Estimates debate.

Mr. Speaker, I do support the construction of these Estimates in their entirety because, quite unlike what the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, who I must admit has made some very important points in his contribution and it leads me to wonder why is it that having listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West yesterday, who was given the privilege and opportunity to reply to the Honourable Member for St. Peter's delivery...

Aside.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

As I said, the Estimates keep us on track with our futuristic look for the Barbadian economy without, in anyway, neglecting the short-term social and economic requirements of this economy and those who live herein.

Mr. Speaker, I earlier said that it might have been better for the Democratic Labour Party to have allowed the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central to have replied to the Honourable Member for St. Peter because this is either the second or third occasion since the last elections that I have sat and listened quite attentively, waiting to hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West using these occasions to engage us in a very serious debate on the way forward for this economy.

Mr. Speaker, at every opportunity presented by this side, led by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, we have put before the people of Barbados our concept of the appropriate macro economic strategy to take this economy forward, in an era where the forces of globalisation and trade liberalisation will intensify. Sir, I do not know why the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West continues to do it because I am firm in the belief that he has the potential to do otherwise. I do not know if he is driven by the political motivation to the point where he chooses not to but I must say that he is disappointing me.

Mr. Speaker, since 1994, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has continued to be a prophet of doom and gloom when it comes to Barbados' economic management and Barbados' economic prospects. Sir, in every speech, in or out of this Honourable Chamber, the Honourable Member continues along a trend of gloom and doom. Sir, the Honourable Member has been doing that because the record of Barbados macro economic performance is such that persons are moving forward. There has been significant improvement in the quality of life of Barbadians, yet while that is going on,

he persists to be a prophet of doom and gloom.

Mr. Speaker, while I listened to the initiatives which the Honourable Member for St. Peter has been trying to put in place which aim to move this economy forward, we sat here yesterday and heard the prognosis from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West about the Barbadian economy going forward would be one characterised by an increasing importance of the distributive sector and possibly tourism. The Honourable Member is resigned to the thought that, notwithstanding the forces of globalisation and trade liberalisation intensifying, notwithstanding the appropriate response measures that this side is trying to put in place as they relate to us recognising that there must be a more balanced growth strategy being promoted, notwithstanding that we should not continue looking to the tourism sector in such a disproportionate way, while we are trying to release the creative energies of Barbadians, the Democratic Labour Party is trying to re-engineer and reposition the sectors that have borne the brunt of the attack from trade liberalisation and globalisation such as the agriculture, manufacturing and international financial services sectors.

Sir, notwithstanding all of that, we are trying to create this new economy. We are trying to give Science and Technology more promotion in our economic strategising. Sir, in all of that, his prognosis for this economy going forward is that we would be one swept and overwhelmed by the forces of globalisation and trade liberalisation.

H:No. 25 (63)1210 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

As a leader of a political party, all he could put forth in this Honourable Chamber is that he could see an economy going forward that is heavily dominated by the distributive sector. He has no faith in the creative talents of the Barbadian people, in the Government nor in the resourcefulness and resilience of us as Barbadians. Sir, he has no faith in those who function in the agricultural, manufacturing and international financial sectors and so all he sees is an economy characterised by imports and selling what is imported.

Mr. Speaker, we know we want better for our Barbadian people and this Government will ensure, with the help of the operators, that we can gain some success to the promotion of a balanced growth strategy.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter in his presentation in November last year made the point, notwithstanding the Barbados economy rebounding after the downturn in the international economy in the events of September 11th, 2001, that if we are to truly achieve our planned growth objective of between 3.00 per cent and 3.50 per cent on a sustained basis, that we need to have major changes to our sectoral contribution to GDP. It is clear that too disproportionate a burden cannot be placed on our tourism industry to generate the type of growth desired in order for us to maintain and enhance the quality of the life of our people.

Sir, if I were in his position, as a trained economist leading a Party, I would want to evaluate in a

critical way the balanced growth strategy that is being promoted by my Government, if there are particular difficulties with the design of the macro economic programme or problems with the sectoral programmes. Sir, to come in here and make no contact whatsoever tells me that the Opposition continues to lose its way and the people of Barbados know this.

Sir, I have said from the outset that apart from the contribution of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy when he focused on the tourism community initiative, which he has a passion for, and some points made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central that I am extremely disappointed with what came from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Mr. Speaker, these Estimates were carefully constructed. They reflect the Government's intention to implement its key initiatives of the last economic statement. A lot has been said on previous occasions on what we need to do with the various sectors which have not been performing as well as we would like in order for us to move this balanced growth strategy forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on the issue of re-engineering the sectors. I am not a prophet of doom and gloom like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North. I have a duty to the people of Barbados to use whatever instruments and talents are available to us to allow the economy to prosper. I also have a duty to ensure that this economy does not shrink in the way that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North would have us believe it would.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South said yesterday that one of the key initiatives we would have to implement in the agricultural sector is to transform the sugar industry. If we continue with business as usual in the sugar industry we would not have one for much longer. We will have to put behind us the business of producing raw sugar in bulk in its current raw form and exporting it to the European Union. We have to find a way of making the sugar industry more cost effective and efficient to maintain it.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter was eloquent in his delivery of how we intend to transform the sugar industry. The Government has been moving to transform the industry into a sugar cane industry which can take advantage of the derivative of the sugar cane plant and make it into pharmaceuticals, alcohol and rum.

Mr. Speaker, we might not get to the Head which deals with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development so I will speak to it now. The Barbados Agriculture Management Company has already established six hectares of high-fibre cane as part of trials to ascertain the viability of the use of this type of cane as a fuel to generate electricity. This is one aspect of how we plan to turn the sugar industry into a sugar cane industry.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture has been doing research work in collaboration with an eminent Barbados scientist, Professor Rawle Holingsworth, who is located at Michigan State University to determine alternative uses for sugar cane. The preliminary reports given to us by the Ministry of Agriculture indicate that there is tremendous potential for the generation of intellectual property from the products in addition to providing raw material for assorted manufacturing products. Sir, this is the kind of work that Professor Holingsworth is helping us with and the Estimates of Expenditure indicates the new thrust of the Ministry in this particular regard.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has been speaking on occasions to the potential importance of the cotton industry and we know that ...

H25/12:20

Sequence 64

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

... this Government decided that it would move forward in a very structured way in seeking to develop this cotton industry.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the problems this sub sector has experienced over the years, the Government has been working extremely close with the private sector. In recent times the establishment of a private sector led company, which will engage in the production, marketing, processing and other activities relating to the development of an integrated West Indian Sea Island Cotton industry.

The private sector has already mobilised the resources to give this company the initial capital. As a matter of fact, the original expectation was that \$500 000.00 in initial funding was made available through the efforts of the private sector, the Government has contributed some funds. I can assure you that there has been an over - subscription and the company in a very short time was able to raise \$600 000.00 to help with its initial work.

Sir, I should also report that in our attempt to eventually regionalise this effort, that is to have cotton growing entities outside of Barbados but within the region being involved in the integrated cotton project, the Jamaica private sector, at this early stage, is an investor and promoter in the new company. In the coming months we will be seeking the participation of other West Indian Sea Island Cotton industry members in the company.

Sir, the aim is to move the company to a level where we could have a fully integrated cotton industry located in the region with participation of all of the growing entities in the region.

Mr. Speaker, the next step for this company is to develop a Prospectus whereby they would be seeking to raise \$10 million to fund an expanded operation for this new company. The new company, at this early stage, will be taking the cotton which is being produced and through a relationship with the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation, who would be responsible for the relocation of the cotton ginnery, from Spencers to Groves, the new company would be looking after the marketing of that cotton as well.

Sir, when the new ginnery is available, the new company will take over the running of the ginnery as well. As we move further into the value-added chain, obviously, the company would be extended but more important we would be seeking the participation of cotton growing entities outside of Barbados.

We are looking to regionalise this effort.

Mr. Speaker, you would have heard in recent times that in respect of linking agriculture with tourism, this initiative that was driven by the Ministry and the Inter American Institute on Agriculture as it relates to the establishment to the Agro Tourism Linkage Centre. We would have heard that this centre was recently launched. The Director General, Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, participated in the launch of this agro tourism linkage project.

Sir, there is potential for the agriculture sector through enhanced linkages with the tourism sector. The Government has created an irrigation project, which the farmers called for and I certainly look forward to the implementation of that project so that the farmers in the areas of Pounders, Ruby, Diamond Valley, Heddings, The Union and those who are located outside of St. Philip South would be able to see the upgrade in the infrastructure that has been promised to them.

This Honourable House should be reminded that in order for us to have agriculture raising its profile and making a more meaningful contribution to our gross domestic output, we need to respond to the farmers' request in such an important area as the provision of irrigation, and that is indisputable.

Mr. Speaker, let me refer to some of the concerns that were mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. It is most unfortunate that persons in Opposition sometimes attempt to send the wrong signals. Yesterday, we had a situation when the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West in order to give the impression that all was not well in Barbados and he continues to promote the doom and gloom concept that there is some uneasiness and workers at the Transport Board are on edge. He also referred to other entities as well.

Sir, he said that persons cannot lead their lives with any level of security or are able to plan for their families. I do not know which workers at the Transport Board were speaking to him but I know what they have been telling me, as Minister responsible for the Transport Board.

Sir, we are aware that we just added new buses to the fleet at the Transport Board and because of the addition of twenty-five buses, and as part of the replacement programme seventy new buses will arrive within the next twelve months, persons had to be recruited to the Transport Board. Apart from workers being uneasy and being sent away from the Transport Board, we had to go through a period of recruitment in order to get the necessary complement for the Operations Department to put those twenty-five new buses into active service. I do not know where the Honourable Member got his information from. There is no truth to it.

The Honourable Member also said that the benefits to consumers are not materialising from competition in the cellular market. Mr. Speaker, when Honourable Members make those statements, they should be made to substantiate them.

Sir, we have a situation where there has been active commotion and persons have been coming to the Barbados public and saying how they are going to operate in order to reduce the rates. Other companies are coming into the market to make sure that their service is as considerate and the prices are put at a level that would make it less burdensome for potential consumers.

Sir, we have seen the magnitude of the reductions in the rates.

H25:

12.30Sequence 65

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12:30 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

You hear them and if I am going to hear that the benefits are not reaching the consumers, I think that anybody who makes such a statement should be made to provide the evidence. I might be led to believe then that if that is the case, they are saying one thing and billing the customers at a different rate.

Sir, they pay for what would have been promoted in the packages. You hear about the magnitude of the reductions, so if the consumers are not getting the benefit, I will carry out a survey with the consumers and see if they are not getting the benefits. I know from the information that is being promoted, that the consumers are responding to, it goes without saying that there should be some material benefit to the consumers.

I do not know if there is something else the companies are doing that I do not know about, but only the Opposition Leader knows about, then he should be made to come in here and say why he would make such a statement.

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader also said that there are concerns over opportunities for small business persons, seeking to give the impression that this Government is turning its back on small business people and once again, that is a very unfortunate statement.

Sir, before I came here this morning, I requested of the Rural Development Commission, information on the services which they deliver to the small business people. I am not talking about the infrastructural work they are doing and this is what they told me. They told me that to date they have disbursed 572 loans to a value of \$4.7 million, from the Rural Enterprise Fund, the Fruit Orchard Fund and the Live Stock Development Fund.

They also told me that about 54 per cent of those loans both in absolute number and in dollar value have gone to the agricultural sector. They told me something more which is of benefit to the small business persons, that is, the training programme which was initiated a couple of years ago, has picked up and, to date, in collaboration with the Small Business Association, to date 980 persons have been trained and a further 469 are currently undergoing training. This training programme is done in a decentralised fashion and there are eleven centres, where active small business persons and potential small business persons can go in Barbados, and access this training free of cost, in such areas as bookkeeping, records management, costing, business start ups, landlord tenant relationship, you name it, they do it at those centres free of cost and in a decentralised fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to close by saying that these Estimates take recognition of the needs of my constituency and I am thankful for that, in the area of road repairs. The Union Road was started and will be completed with monies voted in these Estimates. They take recognition of the lack of recreational facilities in a big constituency like mine. When I looked at what was provided by the National Sports Council, areas like Ruby Park will get a hard court. Rices will get an upgrade of the facilities there, the playing field, replacement of the pavilion, and the provision of lights so that the young people there could engage in sporting activities at night.

They took recognition of the needs of Gemswick needing a facility. The playing field needs improvement, and they need a resource centre or a community centre there, so that the young people in Gemswick also, like those living everywhere else in Barbados, could engage in activity that is wholesome and extremely productive.

The Honourable Member for St. James South, our Minister of Housing, her Estimates reflect that there will be a completion of the acquisition of the land at Six Roads, so that the Attorney-General's office can give us that long awaited civic centre, and she mentioned it yesterday, as well.

They took recognition also, Mr. Speaker, of the need for us to press on with our housing project at Rices. It was planned a couple years ago and it shall come. Also, the beach enhancement project at the Crane, so that all in all, while these Estimates speak to us going forward in a structured way in accordance with our short and medium term macro economic plan, he said we are not losing sight of the immediate social and economic needs of this economy and those who live within.

I am happy to report, while I await the execution of the projects that the Estimates also look after, or take recognition of the needs of the constituency of St. Philip South and, indeed, to some extent St. Philip, in its wider sense.

Mr. Speaker, you have been very patient, and I am obliged to you. I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I beg that this Sitting be now suspended until 140 p.m. today.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this Sitting be now suspended until 1:40 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

House 25, sequence 66, 12:

3709

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to contribute to a debate as important as the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year ahead and to have the opportunity to reflect upon what would have transpired under our watch during the course of the last year.

I hold the view that this exercise is one in which we form an assessment of the fiscal skills of the principal stewards of the public purse in Barbados and an assessment on how fiscal prudence or otherwise would have been reflected in terms of Government's management of the financial resources of this country.

House 25 Sequence 67

1:40 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this context, we concern ourselves more with fiscal issues than with monetary policies, and perhaps even so in general terms in our own context because Barbados is a developing State which in part is characterised by the underdevelopment of money and capital markets.

Sir, the handling of Government's deficit is critical as to its size and the Honourable Minister of Finance, would have spent some time on focusing on the fact that prudent care has been exercised in terms of how the deficit has been managed in recent times and how it is projected to be managed in the ensuing financial year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we observe happily that we are moving away from the situation of an unusually high deficit, to one of a more manageable proportion. Therefore, a reduced deficit is being projected and in shorter order than had been originally estimated. Therefore, I think we have to be happy about that type of situation because countries like ours cannot at all persist in carrying deficits of the order to which we have been called to make recourse for any sustained length of time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the execution of taxation policies is another area of concern and, therefore, would engage the interest of Honourable Members. I would have thought that what was submitted from the Other Side about more time would be spent in analysing, assessing and determining how the implementation and execution of Government's policy on taxation has played into these figures which are before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is well known that our recent circumstances would have required sectoral support being given to some key sectors of the economy during the post- September 11, 2001 context and in the context of global recession. That would have required Government expenditure being called upon to prop up and to support some of the key foreign exchange earning sectors in difficult times.

Of course, in the same set of circumstances with regards to September 11, 2001 and the global recession, Government would have found itself postured to ensure that economic activities at such a level would have been sustained to ensure that domestic viability in business and at employment levels would have been sustained. Government would have also had to ensure that any potential hardships implied for the people of Barbados would have been minimised as much as possible.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we do an assessment of fiscal skills of Government and of the principal stewards of the Honourable Minister of Finance, in order to form a proper perspective as to whether or not prudence has been employed in the exhibition of those skills, one could easily come to the conclusion that it is to be highly commended that, at this time in our development, with all the turbulence and uncertainties around us, Barbados today enjoys a healthy external position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we could not make such a boast in the past but happily we are today at a point where we can boast of a foreign reserve position that is healthy and offers itself as a tremendous source of comfort to those who find it their responsibility to lead and in managing the finances of a small, vulnerable economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course our levels of unemployment remain low and as a Government we aspire to ensure that they fall even lower, and that to the extent unemployment exists, that it seems as an area which could be so tackled as to reduce it to proportions so negligible that, indeed, the possibility of attaining full employment, as that term is defined, is not beyond the grasp, means or skills of this present Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course you will observe that there is a downward trend in terms of taxation in Barbados, at a time when there is such turbulence in the international economy; at a time when Barbados is being more and more excluded from access to more concessionary finance from the traditional funding agencies; at a time when the trend in other centres is to impose heavier loads of taxes onto the consuming public. Of course, that is not the trend here in Barbados with respect to corporate taxation and personal income tax. We are, indeed, seeing a trend towards a reduction and decline, against a background of all else that is happening in the wider world and in our own regional and domestic context. Therefore, a low projected deficit becomes a matter of boast.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the last several years in Barbados, we have seen no reductions whatever in the social services to which Barbadians have become accustomed. There is no obvious threat to the social security nets which were put in place through the hard efforts of those who made them their principal cause. We are seeing an enhanced capital infrastructure development and formation in spite of the fact that Government reduces taxation. We are seeing an enhanced environment where capital infrastructure is becoming a prominent dynamic in the Barbadian economic context.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in recent years there has been no significant increases in the cost of accessing the social services such as bus fares and health services, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this exercise is also one of trying to ascertain the potency, as well as the prudence, with respect to Government fiscal policy for the purpose of social engineering, which I think is one of the tenets upon which the Honourable Member for St. Peter made his presentation yesterday, that is the use of fiscal policy for the development of the social capital and for social engineering.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am of the view that the concept of the retreatist state in a small, open and vulnerable economy such as ours, is a concept not to be embraced. My understanding is that this Government is possessed with a philosophy that the retracting state is not the profile that we, at this stage of our development, ought to adopt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as one who reads widely on these matters, I am sure that you are quite aware of the fact that even in highly developed industrialised market- orientated economies, though there is a healthy cost which sometimes attaches itself to assessing social amenities and social services, the concept of the retreatist state in spite of the prominence of the private sector interest, is not something which is wholly embraced.

H:No. 25 (68)150 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

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

It is not wholly embraced but the state does play a significant role in some sectors of the economy even in industrialised countries while they promote the concept of an open economy. We are not surprised that there are large subsidies in billions of dollars which are given to the farming sectors and other commercial enterprises and activities to prop up those industries and ensure there is vibrancy and viability.

Sir, the state in Barbados cannot simply be a regulator. Some would suggest that it does not simply exist for providing a regulatory framework in which private interest thrive and prosper. The state cannot solely be a facilitator of business development whether it be local private sector-led business or foreign investment. The state cannot simply be a detached stimulus to spur economic activity.

I share the view that the state must engage itself in some level of economic enterprise and that there is a strong justification made for putting a case such as that. The context which gives rise to that view is one in which there is now the absence of traditional investment which is now being diverted from places like Barbados and going to centres in Latin America and Asia. We have the phenomenon of potential investment, traditionally now held by us, diverted to other centres because of factors peculiar to those centres and which do not exist in our own particular context.

We talk about an underdeveloped money market. This is the characteristic on which Barbados is profiled and in the context where there is the scarcity of capital obviously the state would be expected to play a larger role in the enterprise activity of the country than would otherwise be the case.

I support the view of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central where the private sector in Barbados has not served the Barbadian economy as fully as it might have. The private sector believes in private-sector-led growth which traditionally has an orientation geared towards import and distribution rather than produce from manufacture for export. In the context where the private sector carried that type of profile it is not going to be as potent as one would want it to be and there is going to be obvious scope for the involvement of the state in the economy of the country.

The private sector needs to be encouraged and facilitated towards the business of being more productive and export oriented. It is only when we have reached that type of private sector activity to a level that is properly able to sustain and propel the Barbados economy on a sustained path of growth, that we can then start to entertain notions of a lesser role for the state in the economy of the country. Sir the state at this particular juncture must find that there is a role for it in the commanding heights of the economy. Jamaica made the mistake in the 1980s to hold to a philosophy which suggested withdrawal from the commanding of the economy.

I do not think that is where we ought to go because there must be participation in the commanding heights of the economy for reasons already stated, in order to be better able to influence the direction of national development as it relates to those areas and to ensure a wider spread of benefits which would accrue from such business activity from such sectors and development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, having said that, I do not share the view of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central that the state must feel obligated to cling to involvement in any enterprise in the country purely on the basis of sentiment. The business of nationalism when not properly construed can be a tricky one. We have to be careful where notions of nationalism and dynamics of sentiment cloud our judgement and if there are state enterprises which, if partly or wholly divested, could suggest greater economic and social benefits to the country, then the state must be prepared to engage in a policy of partial or full divestment. Sir, we cannot bring sentiment to that type of situation.

We have to be clear in our judgement as to when best to establish strategic partnerships and when it is best to sell interest in part or total. If the state is serious and sober about the business of participating in enterprise and being entrepreneurial and participative in the commanding heights of the economy, then judgement must be prudent and exercised in a timely fashion to ensure maximum benefit for the people whose stewards we are with reference to how we manage the public purse.

The expansion of education opportunity is a thing which is continuing in Barbados. It has been such a tradition that it is not a phenomenon. What is phenomenal about it is the plan conceived by this Government in order to further the benefits which have accrued to Barbadians as a result of having a strong and sound educational system.

The Government speaks to its plans for the establishment of the University College of Barbados and more will be said of this. We are, therefore, acknowledging the need to and embracing the plan to ensure that there is increased access to educational opportunities at tertiary level here in Barbados to ensure that the many hundreds who are turned away yearly from the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the Barbados Community College, that this situation can be arrested and brought to a halt.

If any Barbadian wants to further himself through education at home, the opportunity ought to be made available and expenditure in those terms be seen as an investment in their future and the future of the country.

H25/14:00

Sequence 69

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

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

Sir, facilitating adult education classes through evening classes is a tremendous thing.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY:

There are many people who fail to take full advantage of the secondary opportunity and who are now doing so. This is to be lauded and supported. Facilitating the matter of retraining and retooling the work force is an expediency in today's terms because the world is changing. The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown spoke with reference to this that the profile of the work site is not what it used to be. Therefore, in facing the tumultuous changes that are taking place around us, one would have to make sure that its work force is retrained and retooled.

Sir, the matter of retraining in the public service sector is also very critical. Barbados cannot develop and thrive in spite of Government's management and policies unless there is a public service sector which is subject to skills enrichments, in today's terms. National development in Barbados depends, as it does on other dynamics, critical upon the development of the skills available in the public sector of Barbados and one cannot over emphasise the importance of that type of activity.

Sir, one has to be also appreciative of the fact that there is the accommodation in these expenditures, projections and plans for some target groups who are part of the potentially marginalised groups in Barbados - if we are not careful both as a government and as people - people who are affected by the HIV virus, whether they are immediately the subjects of it or closely related to those who are immediately the subjects of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the homeless is a specific target group mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Peter in his presentation. I have my own view on how this business of homelessness is to be properly defined. I am of the opinion that there are people in Barbados who have some form of shelter over their heads at nights but they are quite homeless, if you take into the mix, considerations such as substantial accommodation, insecurity of tenure and therefore subject to whimsical evictions. If you take into consideration the element of persons being subjected to exploitation because of the lack of financial means, then you are of the view that there are some people who have some form of shelter around them but who are, in fact, homeless. Of course, there are those who are on the streets and without any form of shelter around them.

Therefore, any effort to address that situation is to be commended and should be encouraged. I think that this should be viewed as an additional step in that direction and not the Government's long-term ability to respond to that particular situation.

Sir, there are some inmates in penal institutions and ex-inmates, former residents of penal institutions. There is a cost attached for their care while they are residents in the penal institutions. There is also a cost attached to preparing them for reintegration into normal society and a cost attached to providing the opportunity after their period of confinement.

I see this as part of the expenditure which must necessarily be engaged in by any considerate, compassionate and conscientious government in trying to ensure that the groups with the potential for being marginalised are not left out in the cold.

There are some wards at the Government Industrial Schools, Dodds and Summerville, who must also be provided for. These Estimates provide for not only enhanced facilities and care; it provides for the modernisation of the concepts that guide the formation of the environment in which they live, it speaks to curriculum expansion and modernisation, it speaks to preparing those students, in spite of their problematic past, who live in a responsible adult modern Barbados in which they compete and contribute to the development of the society.

Sir, the provision of psychological and counseling services for Glendiary and the Government Industrial School, is an expenditure to be supported by this Honourable House.

We live in a situation where, in spite of our efforts to provide for the development of our social capital and to use our fiscal policy for prudent and social engineering, we are finding ourselves being buffeted by the impact of globalisation. Our response to that simply cannot be the trimming of the state, wholesale unfettered privatisation or bridled liberalisation. Care must be taken to ensure that there is a selective development of certain competencies.

The Honourable Minister of Finance spoke to these in his last Financial Statement and some address was given to this matter in his presentation yesterday on the selective development of competencies to ensure that Barbados is put on a better competitive footing both regionally and internationally.

Sir, the development of a creative economy and technological capacity at the level of the community was addressed in the last Financial Statement so that the working class in Barbados is not further marginalised by this trend toward the marginalisation of states on the basis of access to the application of technology. This is a reality.

The Honourable Member for St. Peter spent time focusing on that and I believe that it is very important because we run the risk of finding that states like ourselves are further marginalised, not necessarily on the basis of GDP, resource endowment or by some measure of a development index, but marginalised because we are not in a position to apply technology to our enterprise culture or to plan a programme for our national development.

In order to counter that drift to a potential development of literacy, care must be taken to ensure that technology is accessible to all Barbadians. This can be applied by us in our enterprise culture to make

our commercial enterprises more viable and competitive in today's world.

Sir, areas which are characterised by high levels of illiteracy are also observed to be areas where democracy is usually very unstable or under threat. I think that in order to ensure that our democracy is preserved and brought to a greater level of maturity, this phenomenon is not one that can be easily overlooked. We must give some attention to that as well.

Therefore, Government must be proactive in its policy to ensure that there is no drift. I saw the attempt in recent financial presentations and the attempt in the presentation yesterday to ensure that there is a universal service provision of new technology being available to Barbadians at the level of the community.

Sir, we talk about universal service with reference to telecommunications, telephone and the postal service but we talk universal service here with reference to the access of modern technology at the level of the community so that working class children can also benefit from it. The Government needs to do whatever it can to foster growth in this area and at the level of the enterprise.

H25:

1410 p.m.

Sequence 70

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

2:10 p.m.

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

But there are benefits to be realised through sustained investment in social capital and social engineering, educated, and a skilled improved workforce is the foundation of a service oriented economy, to which we aspire.

The business of land ownership privilege is also at the working class level, and at the level of those who traditionally had been seen as tenantry dwellers in Barbados. The business of land ownership creating a land ownership among the traditional tenantry class in Barbados, is a very important development which needs to be facilitated even further.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed an honour to participate in my first debate on the draft Appropriation Bill for 2004 to 2005. I intend to spend some time looking critically at a number of areas which I believe some measure of profound thought needs to be brought to bear. In particular, Sir, I will make some specific references to a number of statements made by the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter is on record in the House of Assembly as indicating that the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue represent his major financial management tool.

Sir, what I have observed, after reviewing several Estimates debates of the House is that there has been a tendency, under this Barbados Labour Party administration, to establish a de link in the Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue and the Budgetary Statement and Financial Proposals. It is a dangerous trend.

Sir, that de link is established by the fact that under normal circumstances, if anyone understands financial management strategy you cannot bring a Budgetary Proposal several months after the Estimates Appropriation. You cannot do it because both of them are linked. The Budgetary Proposals are supposed to define the strategies by which you are supposed to raise the revenue, in order to explain the Estimates.

Therefore, his strategy that I have seen where Budgetary Proposals have been brought way after the Estimate is indeed a fool-hardy one and cannot stand the scrutiny of financial prudent management. It cannot, and I want to start right there to say that all the talk I am hearing about fiscal management and prudent management, the initial premise from which they are practising and the financial management strategy, is faulty.

I want to now spend two minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this whole business of supplementaries or budget finances. The reason why it is critical to the Estimates debate, and some Honourable Members may not want to hear it, is because it is a deliberate strategy, and a purposeful strategy, in order to underestimate the deficit in Barbados. Sir, I am going to bring evidence to support what I am saying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I reviewed all of the money Bills brought to Parliament from March 1999 to April 2003. They are all in the Estimates, Sir, if the Honourable Member would want to read it. Sir, from March 1999, the strategy was established because between March 1999 and August 1999, we had \$63 million in Supplementaries in those seven months.

Sir, between November 1999 and August 2000, another seven months, we had \$83 million in Supplementaries. Between October 2000 and August 2001 another eight month period, we had \$111 million in Supplementaries and between October 2001 and August 2002, we had \$153 million in Supplementaries.

Sir, the significance of this is that this is not expenditure accounted for in the Appropriation Bill.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is deliberately misleading this Chamber and I can only assume that it is due to his newness that he would seek to accuse the Government of breaching the laws of this country.

Any Supplementary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is properly carried in the Final Appropriation Bill that is passed at the end of a financial year. Therefore, to suggest that it is not reflected in the Appropriation legislation is an incorrect, unfortunate and deliberate misleading of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking that the Honourable Member withdraw those remarks. It is a serious allegation against the Government of this country.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Honourable Member is going to assert, I never said whether it is the final ones or the initial ones, but if the Honourable Member is going to assert...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a serious Chamber and the rules of this Chamber do not allow Honourable Members to impute motives to other Honourable Members that constitute breaches of the law and are hence improper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a child's game. The Appropriation Bill comes in two forms. The main Appropriation Bill and the final one. If the Honourable Member has made an innocent mistake, he should say so and move on, but he cannot be allowed in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to impute improper motives in circumstances where the process of going for Supplementaries is as old as the modern financing system that we have.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

I would like you to rephrase what you said, please.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Absolutely. Sir, I will rephrase it because the essence has not been altered in anyway by the position. Sir, all the information is in the back of the Estimates. I have nothing more to say on that matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do underscore the importance as to why this is a strategy. In order to state the deficit in Barbados purposely, I will have to do some arithmetic for some Honourable Members over there.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. If the Honourable Member really has no knowledge of the financial affairs of Barbados, he should keep quiet. He is misleading the House again. There are out turned figures and, therefore, when the Final Appropriation Act is passed, all monies voted by this House go into the accounting process to determine the deficit.

Therefore, to suggest that Supplementaries are brought to understate a deficit, is an exercise in sophistry, not befitting any Honourable Member of this Chamber. In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a breach of the Standing Orders.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, first of all I had asked you to rephrase what you said. You mentioned these Supplementaries over the last years, could you tell me exactly what you mean?

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Certainly. If the Honourable Member would have listened to a qualifying explanation then, there would have been no need for this. I wanted to indicate that in this document, there is evidence of actual expenditure from 2001, 2002 and 2003. I am saying that during those Estimates as indicated, Sir, one can clearly see the impact of understating the deficit by understating expenditure.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. Sir, to say that the Government is understating the deficit, is to accuse the Government of fraudulent motives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it cannot be allowed in this Chamber, either from a new Honourable Member or from an old Honourable Member that you can lay...

House 25, sequence 71, 14:
2014

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will reemphasize the point that when I look in the document, the total expenditure identified for the year 2001-2002 is listed as \$2 146 000 000 and the revenue as \$1 722 000 000, giving a total deficit of \$424 million. During that same period the expenditure indicated did not include the supplementaries of \$153 million. Therefore, if one is to add that...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is selectively using information to mislead this House. Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of the figures in relation to Government's revenue and expenditure once compiled and completed on the basis of actual receipts or actual expenditures are reflected in the Central Bank Report and the Economic Report in which these things come. His knowledge does not indicate that when these Estimates are laid that actual expenditure is available only until December, 31st of the preceding year and that January and February are projected figures. If there is a problem with that, then he should resort to the Central Bank Report and to the Economic Report for the actual outturn figures.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you have a projected estimate and you have a projected expenditure at Time X for the year 2001 but when you actually review your expenditure and the actual expenditure that you revised turns out not to be \$2 146 000 000 but to be \$2 300 000 000, can you tell me what has happened? Those are the facts that are in this document here.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is so misleading the House and I will give the lie to his statement now. In the Estimates for 2003-2004, the Government projected a deficit of 4.7 per cent.

What these Estimates show on page 2 that are now before this House for debate is that the projected deficit for this financial year will be 2.6 per cent which is less than half. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the actual current expenditure down to January 31, 2004 is \$1.766 billion including all of the supplementaries. That is the lie that is being given to the speech by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West. It is unfortunate that he feels that this is the only way by which he can challenge the Leader of the Opposition to lead the Democratic Labour Party, but he gets a failing grade on this count.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not be sidetracked at all. I know exactly what I am saying and I will say what I have to say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make a more critical point. I have some concerns regarding the use of the taxpayers money from the Consolidated Fund of Barbados.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will restate my position in another way. I will quote from Hansard, the House of Assembly official record of the first session 1994-2004 as I want now to be very specific.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. There is no record in this Parliament of 1994-2004. The Honourable Member is misleading the House even as on basic an issue as quoting from a document in this Chamber.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, continue with your debate.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

In Hansard record of December 01, 1998 to be specific, and this is the Honourable Prime Minister speaking, and I quote

“Sir, the Auditor General has from time to time referenced to the fact that the Government itself very often makes loans to enterprises and non-governmental enterprises and there is no record of those loans having been made, nor there is no security in support of those loans. That, obviously, is a very grave deficiency in the presentation, control and management of public accounts.”

How can it be interpreted any other way, Sir, can you tell me?

Sir, I will go on to explain the gravity of this situation and this charge I am making this evening. He continues:

“Therefore, we are now writing into the legislation the provision that the loans which are given to Government enterprises and non-governmental enterprises shall be secured by way of loan agreement.”

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. Section 25A of the Financial Administration and Audit Act does not seek to legitimate any breach of the law.

House 25 Sequence 72

2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. Section 25(A) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act does not seek to legitimate any breach of the law. The quotation just cited by the Honourable Member reflects a desired position on the part of the Honourable Minister of Finance, to ensure the policy of having loans to public enterprises and statutory organisation being recorded somewhere. Section 25 (A) gives effect to that, and I quote

“Loans which are given to Government to Government enterprises and non government enterprises shall be secured by way of a loan agreement or debenture mortgage depending on the circumstances of the loan, the terms of which are to be agreed by the Cabinet.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, far from there being a legitimatising of the breach of the law, this Government has put in place a system of accountability to ensure that which has occurred under previous administrations and in this administration in earlier years, was now covered by law to ensure that Cabinet had to sign off on these loans. Therefore, the Honourable Member is still imputing improper motives when he suggested that this is an action taken by this Government to legitimise breaches of the law which was before taken.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the important point is that the Legislature is always superior to the Executives.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is again misleading the Honourable House. There are three arms of Government and I would wish that either the Leader of the Opposition or the former Leader of the Opposition would give him a tutorial.

It is, therefore, misleading to say that the Executive is superseded by Parliament. They are equal in importance in our system of Government. If the Honourable Member might want to make the point that in his view, the loan should come to Parliament instead of the Executive, then that is a different point but the Honourable Member cannot say that the Executive is lesser than Parliament and that, therefore, the Government is hiding from accountability by bringing it to the Executive and not to Parliament.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point here is that Parliament represents the total population in a democratic process, not the Cabinet. The Cabinet represents 16 seats out of a total number of 30 but Parliament represents all Barbadians. Therefore, I will not accept that in Barbados we are supposed to have a situation where loans could be given to non governmental entities and they do not go to Parliament for

scrutiny. Where is the accountability?

Sir, if I am to accept that this action has improved accountability and transparency, the point would be that it cannot stand any ethical test at all.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to reflect on some inaccuracies in the projected revenues. I want to refer to the major areas of revenue as indicated in this document. The major areas indicated are taxes on international trade in 2004 as follows

Year Actual (Revised) Estimated Increase

2004 \$170 m. \$186 m \$16 m.

2004/05 \$786 m. \$786 m. \$852 m. \$65 m.

Property

Taxes \$113 m.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

On a point of order. If the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is going to speak to actual taxes raised by any particular component in 2003 to 2004, he would have to say as at what particular time because the last check that was made, the financial year for 2003 to 2004 has not come to an end. Therefore, if the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is talking about the actual taxes raised, he should speak to a particular period in time in the financial year 2003 to 2004.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is that we are about two or three weeks away from the end of the financial year.

Sir, if we look at the projected income, taxes on income and profit, it is estimated that \$561 million and the projected figure for 2004 to 2005, is \$662 million, a \$101 million increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the critical point. I want the Honourable Prime Minister to tell this Honourable House how he intends to increase revenue on land tax when there have been recent amendments to decrease the land tax in Barbados, and when there has been a reduction of the transfer tax in Barbados?

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West should take the advice rendered by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, that is to get a tutorial from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West or from the Honourable Member for St. John but it is very unlikely that he will get it from the Honourable Member for St. John.

Sir, there has been an attempt from this Government to reduce the level of land tax. What the Government has done is to seek to reduce the actual rates that were being charged but we all know that based on the volume of transaction, if we increase the base never mind the modular rates might change, then it would still end up with a larger projected figure than one might have collected in any one year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the Honourable Member should pause for breath but more importantly he should pause for thought.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the critical point is, and I will re-emphasize it, I would still want the Prime Minister to come and tell this Honourable House if we have a situation in Barbados ...and I remember when land tax rates were reduced on two occasions.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will also take the opportunity to ask the Honourable Prime Minister to tell this House how the increase in tax revenue with respect to incomes and profits, to the tune of \$101 million is possible, given the last budgetary proposals that was laid in this House?

I would want Members to remember that there was a reduction in personal income tax, a reduction in corporation tax, and there is supposed to be a further reduction in both income and corporation taxes. There were reductions in taxes to the insurance companies. There were reductions in increases in exemptions. There were also further increases with respect to exemptions, to the individual.

H:No. 25 (73)240 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

I want to understand how there is an increase of \$101 million at a time when there is downsizing and constriction of our economic base in Barbados. There are mergers and people are going home every day yet someone projects a massive increase of \$101 million. Sir, I am not going to believe that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make one last point and I will not be detracted by the other side. I want to refer to the statement about the net international reserves in Barbados. I want to make the point that the net international reserves can either be earned by the traded sectors, the foreign exchange earning sectors or it can be borrowed. It can, therefore, be reflected in your capital and financial account entries in this country.

Sir, in Barbados the highest contribution to the GDP in Barbados was 9.00 per cent in 1994 and it steadily declined since then. If the Member for St. Philip South wants this information, he should read the report from the Central Bank of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to refer to the review of the Central Bank of Barbados of December 2003 where it is indicated that the surplus on capital and financial accounts has been due to private net long flow, capital and financial inflow for corporate sector divestment, tourism related products and public utility. Sir, the money is not earned by the traded sectors in this country. The money in the net national reserve is borrowed and that cannot be refuted. When you combine a net international reserve which has a borrowed component with a high deficit and a foreign component of the national debt, that is only tantamount to fiscal instability. Sir, this also cannot be refuted by any so-called economist.

They believe they can bamboozle people in this island by talking about fiscal management, prudent management and fancy catch phrases such as 'counter-cyclical' et cetera.

Sir, I want to refer again to the June 2003 Economic Review and the Member for St. Philip South should listen to this carefully because it indicates whether we have a deficit with respect to foreign money coming into Barbados or foreign money leaving Barbados. It said that for the first time in Barbados since 1999 the external account registered a deficit. Sir, this means that more foreign exchange was leaving Barbados than was coming in. This was further supported by the Article Four Consultation with the IMF in February 2002. It stated that were it not for a net capital inflow of US\$115 million which covered the external account deficit, that this country would be in trouble.

Therefore, any time there is an external current account deficit along with a high national debt and a high trade deficit in terms of percentage of GDP, this country is in trouble. Sir, that is the definition of macro economic instability in any text book. This means that we are tottering on the brink. At one time, we are barely holding on and at another time, because we have borrowed some money, it appears as though we have a net international reserve.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Sir, I have read a lot of macro economics instability but I have never seen a concise definition which speaks to the particular indicator that the Member for St. Philip West has given. Maybe the Member can give us one such text book which I nor the Member for St. Michael North West have read where we can find such a concise definition of macro economic instability.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very concerned about this so-called macro economic instability in Barbados projected by the Prime Minister. I was forced to review our deficits from 1990. In 1993, after the structural adjustment programme, the deficit as a percentage of GDP was 2.1%. By 1996, it was 2.6%, by 2001 it was 3.8 per cent, by 2002 it was 5.25, by 2003 it was 6.0% and it is an internationally accepted standard that a manageable deficit should be between 2.5 per cent and 3.1 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is interesting that this range was surpassed since 2001, it was doubled by 2003 and now Members are telling me that they plan a counter-cyclical programme yet they run the deficit at 6 per cent of GDP almost double what is would be accepted. Now that it is having a negative impact on our debt service capacity, the Prime Minister shouts out and says that he has to check the deficit. Sir, how is he going to do it, when he has increased capital and current expenditure in these Estimates.

Sir, when I look at the difference between the two of them and I then look at the ratio, there is no significant increase that would allow for a decline of the deficit from 5.6 per cent to 2.5 per cent. Sir, it simply cannot happen. What makes it more significant is that while they increased the deficit to an unmanageable proportion, this is what the

Government did.

H25/14:50

Sequence 74

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of... Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

This Government became a borrowing machine and increased the domestic debt up by \$2 billion in seven years and the foreign debt to over \$2 billion to the point where we have a national debt of over \$4 billion, at a time when we have a deficit that is strangling Barbados.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Member, you have another minute.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Thank you. I want this House to recall that the Prime Minister in the last Budget in November 2003, said that the national debt of the GDP was 72 per cent and that was too high and he must now reduce it to 60 per cent. How is he going to accomplish that? Furthermore, the Prime Minister went on to another idiotic strategy, comparatively so, that in order to get more ...

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Member, I would like you to withdraw what you have just said. You cannot refer to anything that is being said by an Member as idiotic. Member, what a Member says cannot be idiotic. Could you withdraw?

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

I withdraw, Sir. Let me rephrase, Sir. The Member embarked on a strategy that plunged Barbados into further difficulty. The reason why that is so, is because the Member went, on amending the Local Loan Act in 2002 to enhance the domestic borrowing capacity. He could not borrow any money outside of Barbados, so he turned to borrowing on the local market.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Furthermore, they understood what they were trying to do because in the Budget on September 29, 1997, as part of a privatisation strategy to create business for the Stock Exchange, this is what is in the Budgetary summary, that Government planned to privatise the Barbados National Bank, Insurance Corporation of Barbados, The Barbados National Oil Company, the Grantley Adams International Airport and the sea port. I do not know anybody who could have any kind of sense that would want to privatise an airport and a sea port, which is part of your security.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

Member, your time has expired.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Sir, I believe that I have said what I had to say and irrespective of all the heckling on the other side, they cannot refute anything that I have said in here today.

Sir, I would like to say, if the Member for St. Philip South believes that he is a teacher at the University of the West Indies, he should go back there. If he believes that he is some guru and can teach anybody in here, he is sadly mistaken.

I thank you.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad that the Member for St. Thomas has given way to seniority in age, looks and capability.

Sir, I am not going to get entangled in the complexities of pseudo economics or primary mathematic calculations couched in complex language based on impulsive reactions and sometimes strong militant tones that are not always too caroling to the ears. Sir, while I respect and understand the passion of the Member, I think that it would be better if sometimes he remained a little more composed and expressed himself on these particular matters. I think that he has good intentions and is eager to put a different perspective but sometimes the substance, if it so can be called, is lost in the militancy or the theatrical approaches to delivery and it would be more appropriate for him to be composed. Sir, I would like the Member on this side, who is of the same profession, to be called to rescue him in his state.

Sir, I feel that it is better for me to deal with the Estimates because I really do not care if the deficit fluctuates up or down. The small margin of fluctuation that moves 2.5 here and there, that kind of arithmetic has never impressed me but it somehow stimulates the minds of some people and it gives them a sense of inner joy when they can quote the figures that they see in the Estimates.

I want to be very simple because my constituency is beyond the geography of St. Michael East. I consider my political interest to be an interest beyond the borders of St. Michael East, beyond the borders of Barbados and the region is necessary because I am from a special group in the society and in this world who have been relegated to the lower end of the society and we have a battle against the iniquities in the system.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

The reality is, somebody must speak in here for a special type of people and approximately 2 000 people from St. Michael East sent me to Parliament to speak on their behalf and I will speak regardless of what the views are and I will identify my role; nobody in here will identify my role for me, in the Parliament of Barbados. If the role which I decide is not a representation of the people, then when I return on the next occasion the people will make a decision about that. My job is to look to see how the programmes enhance the lives of a special group of people.

Sir, I am nothing to do with those who come from an opulent class in the society. I am not striking or fighting with anybody in representation of anybody from the opulent class, regardless to which political party they belong. I am interested in one group and the group that does not enjoy the benefits of equity of this country.

Sir, I want to put my contribution within the context of the importance of the social services to the lives and the general development of ordinary people in the street. All the talk about how many roads have been built and how many buildings have been erected, at the end of the day if it does not impact on the quality of the lives of the people, we will answer to them at the correct time and that is how the Estimates should be examined for me.

Sir, figures can be put and minor changes made every year and show that there is a small difference in the amount but we are dealing here with an expenditure that is \$2.4 billion. Although I am interested in how the capital develops as well, I am mainly interested in the social services.

I am happy to support any Government who recognise the importance of promoting programmes that either enhance or sustain the level of the social services in this country.

H25:

1500 p.m.

Sequence 75

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

3:00 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

I am not going to give the impression that I am so consummate in analysis that I understand everything in the management of a country, or have all the details of the individual ministries. I know when somebody is moving adrift from the philosophical moorings, which I consider to be the main stabilizing element, in the political dispensation to which I belong, or to which any other party belongs,

that is likely to carry this country adrift. I understand that well, so there is no question about that and I am concerned with the course of development.

I must confess, without reservation that I have no doubt about the clarity of the Leader of the Party. I have no doubt about that but there is obviously a lack of commonality across board, and because of that, sometimes the individual areas of administration, of ministerial responsibility, do not appear to be at one with the position of the leadership. I am pleased that this year again, we can see over \$76 612 776 going to the Ministry of Social Transformation. I also want to complement the Minister with all the trials that he has been through within the last year, for a successful execution of responsibilities of Minister of Social Transformation.

I want to say the same for the Minister of Tourism. I am also happy to see that the Government still understands the importance of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Housing. There are other ministries that are of importance but as I said, my focus is now on the social services and we are now going to spend \$2 429 542 248 in the coming year. It is outlined as it is allocated to the various departments of Government in this document.

Social policy is fundamental and I have said before that it must be put on the same status as economics in this country. I see it even as a consequence of our historic experience. There was an intensification of the importance of social policy from in the 1930s, when this country was experiencing all forms of social disorder. Sir, people who had money in this society, never recognised that to inject funds into the social services would also enhance the quality of their lives and the quality of those persons whom they considered to be unworthy in the system of any economic class who also had the range of political authority, spending money that would redound to the benefit of the ordinary people. They were of the opinion that they would not spend the state money in that way. They were repatriating funds and expanding their economic horizons in businesses across Barbados.

I am of the opinion that the resources of this country were, even before that period but more so when we look back to the period of the 1930s, we have seen a constant inequitable distribution of the resources. This was not only because of class interest in this country, but because in some cases, ministers believed that they must preserve their political kingdom by sacrificing the interest of others. This is a policy that has been going on for a considerably long time. It has happened in both political parties, and I know it is happening in this Party as well.

Sometimes jobs, depending on the Ministry, the Minister who is responsible for the Ministry that has jobs available, would keep the jobs for themselves. It is a selfish policy. It goes back of our understanding of the behaviour of man. Thomas Hobbes in the Leviathan was very clear on how men behave, solitary, mastic, bullish and sharp.

Sir, we have people in ministries with all the billions that are available, there is a possibility that a particular representative or constituency can be disadvantaged because of that kind of mind set, and because there are people who believe in unequal distribution, based on social pecking order in the system itself.

We have to address that. It is serious because before self Government, and I want to make it clear because I do not like to generalise on these issues, before black people became in control of their interest

at the level of the central Government, they were people who plundered the resources of this country, robbed the lands and repatriated funds, passed a lot of criminal legislation in this Parliament, created criminal institutions, because slave masters cannot create just institutions. Slave masters are criminals, perpetuating the system right through colonialism, establishing criminal institutions, establishing criminal rules and procedures and flaunting the symbols, even in this Parliament and even in the face of black people, after self Government and Independence.

Sir, that is why from time to time, progressive leaders with a vision and understand the destiny that comes from that vision, formulate a clear, unequivocal ideology to take the country forward.

In the 1950s the Premier of the day, who then became Prime Minister of the Federation was very clear, when he looked at self Government and understood its importance, and when he recognised the need for social instruments and units in the system. When we reached the 1960s the Prime Minister of the day, the late Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow was clear on his vision. He had a nationalist programme. He was clear on nationalism, and clear on the importance of self reliance in the system. House 25, sequence 76, 15:1014

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Therefore, he put programmes in place that demonstrated the politics of change that were required for the time. The relevance of the politics of the time was very clear but it was changed and there was a collective understanding of enhancing the capacity of the state in order to carry the country forward. He expanded the level of secondary and tertiary education because he understood the required mechanisms to move the country forward. Sir, it was not just nationalism or the planting of an ideology on a society. He recognised that radical changes also had to be made in the society to bring about the kind of economic and social transformation that will enrich the capacity of the country in order for it to move forward on the basis of self-reliance. He understood that well.

Mr. Speaker, intellectuals along with Members of Government use their intellect to come up with strategies on how we should move forward. People were pauperizing the system. The system was wrecked and we had to turn to Sir Arthur Lewis for clarity on what we could have done in a country where the level of its population was so high that we could not provide employment for the people in this country apart from the migration process which started in the 1920s to Great Britain; Panama; Costa Rico; Cuba; Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. He came up with industrialization by invitation. As a consequence, by having certain concessions in the system, we attracted people to this country to invest in this country and to provide work for the people. The jobs at the time were low-paid jobs and we had to make a decision on the best of two evils, whether we support the growing strength of the union sometimes or whether we would take the jobs. At that time we decided that we would accept cheap labour and not no labour at all. Those industries are now gone.

Since the late 1990s we have been hearing about fundamental changes in the configuration of the civil service and in the structure of governance and an expansion of the Public Accounts Committee. There was a whole set of new formations to meet the changes in the society. Inclusion is what it is. It is a

wild concept of bringing together forces that were once antagonistic towards each other, that is, a pluralist approach in bringing all of these people together to have the collective intellect of persons with a diversity of views to finding a consensus and trying to use that capacity to enrich and carry the country forward in a progressive way. I know because of my experiences that all of those who are exclusionists are not deceased.

Sir, I want to say this because I do not know how far I would get and I want to speak to a specific issue here today.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Sir, I talked about one aspect of the social inequalities in this country and the efforts over the years to formulate a sensible ideological position. The preamble to the Estimates itself tells you the requirement of a search for a vision. We have heard it before being said that the guidelines for the political dispensation would be inclusion. Last week we heard a slight modification of it as some kind of state entrepreneurship. I want to believe that there are certain principles that ought to be underpinning this philosophy of inclusion, not the United States of America philosophy of inclusion that is based on fear and coercion but an inclusion that is based on an altruistic commitment to man and a commitment to changing things for the better of the society with special emphasis on those who are most disadvantaged and find themselves alienated from the mainstream of some of these decision-making bodies and from the mainstream of contributing to the general development of the society itself. I believe when we talked about inclusion it was for that purpose. Mr. Speaker, some persons have a very narrow concept of what inclusion means. Some people believe that it means fragmenting other political forces and the gathering of the pieces of the forces to compress atoms, but there is a lot of danger in compressing atoms. There are people who see it that way. The Estimates, the programmes and the plans would only make sense to a representative if the representative could point to elements of the plan and could see the execution of the plan, because words written or spoken certainly do not constitute action. Sometimes you are excluded in the execution process from any benefits of these programmes. Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the people of St. Michael East would not be victims of a misguided view based on any false perception of absolute power of ministers to do what they like without any concern for even the general party's position. What I say will make me a very unfriendly man but I am not looking for friends in Parliament, I am interested in representing people. In my constituency I have two of the major social problems in this country, a problem of homelessness and a problem where people cannot develop their homes because of restrictions. I am going to say this over and over again until somebody responds in a positive way. The people of St. Michael East cannot develop their lands because of the restrictions of the Town and Country Planning Department.

House 25 Sequence 77

3:20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people on the northern side of my constituency can never enjoy the benefits of waterborne toilets, while there are other areas that are clustered with housing. Sir, I have a major housing problem with overcrowded families. I have a problem with houses being overcrowded with more than 13 persons in one house. I have difficulties with the social relationship at the domestic level of the household. In some cases, there are young men who were incarcerated and on release, now find it difficult to find some place to live and, therefore, they live on the streets. There are persons who would like to become engaged in a Christianised union in the form of a marriage and cannot do it because they have no place to live.

Sir, I have only cited some of the social issues relating to one specific plank of the social concerns in my constituency. I then find myself in a situation where, whenever a housing unit becomes available, there is a clique who think that, as tin goddesses and gods, they can make decisions and could exclude my people who are experiencing some of the most harsh, inhumane social problems. This clique then brings their social problems into my constituency, which intensifies the difficulties of the social ills and, therefore, secure themselves politically. These persons then attempt to bring all kinds of justifications and rationalisation to justify this behavior when I know that it is based on an injurious conduct, unsuitable for anybody who sees themselves as a people's representative and as a Parliamentarian, especially in a party where the principles of democratic socialism or inclusion ought to underpin the guidelines of the destiny of the party itself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am concerned because in my constituency today, if one drives over the hill by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), one would see six National Housing Corporation units that have been closed for over 2 ½ years. When the units were constructed the people were told that they would have been rented. Now decisions have been made unilaterally because of ministerial absolutism to sell the units, and I am hearing that they would be sold to poor people at over \$115 000 per unit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are two units in the Ivy Housing Area, where one person is now incarcerated and the other person was evicted. This is a unit that had belonged to a woman who had three National Housing Corporation units before. Since this person has been evicted, I am now told about serious problems in other constituencies. I am told that two of the units would be allocated to persons from outside my constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at Eckstein Village, there are four persons who were removed from the constituency a considerable time ago, with the intention of helping them with housing. I have one special case that I will speak to later.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER:

The Member has one minute.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those persons at Eckstein Village are coming from the worst social conditions, and are still awaiting housing. Sir, I have two houses in my constituency and I am told that the people from my constituency do not fit into the category of priority in the circumstances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, however small or large the revenue is, the expenditure or the whole arithmetic

calculations that we have witnessed here, at the end the day, they only have relevance to the people of my constituency and to me, if it contributes to the general development and welfare of those persons of whom I have spoken.

Sir, while St. Michael East might be perceived as my major focus, I wonder how many other persons are experiencing these difficulties where the concept that undergirds the direction of the political party, the whole vision that ought to mobilise and guide the political party forward, has now found itself going towards a different destiny altogether, to what I was made to understand is the ideology that is guiding this particular dispensation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must thank you for the opportunity and that is why I had to make mention of this specific social problem. I will certainly speak on this matter on another occasion. I thank you.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this matter but must exercise great restraint if I am not to expose those who parade as the defenders of the poor and destitute for what they are truly.

First, let me start at the point at which the Member who has just sat has spoken and ended. Sir, I wish to develop a point which locates the distribution of housing units in the context of social development and providing housing opportunities for all Barbadians.

It is the responsibility of the National Housing Corporation to provide housing for all people. There are housing areas in some constituencies, not all, which means that if one follows a logical process where individuals live in a constituency where a house fire subjects them to house loss; where a motor vehicle runs off the road and demolishes a house; where people are made homeless by desperate social circumstances; where, as I had to deal with a couple of weeks ago, four minors were living in a room, not a house, where they are seeing and hearing a male prostitute bringing in his clients and performing acts in their presence. Therefore, as Minister of Housing, I have to take a decision when I see those kinds of crises. Therefore, where a Parliamentary representative believes that where a unit becomes vacant in his constituency, he must have it no matter what, those children are poor and are suffering and deserve equally to have a unit over their heads.

H:No. 25 (78)330 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

If they come from a constituency where there is no housing estate Government has to provide housing for them in a housing estate because we cannot leave them in that condition. When someone who purports to defend the poor and destitute is so selfish that they must have all the units in their constituency and will not give way to somebody in those circumstances, something has to be wrong. Sir, if I cannot defend those individuals then I cannot be worth my salt as a politician.

It is unfair for the Member, knowing the circumstances of the people who were sent to live in his area to make it appear as if I am using social class to determine who has access to housing. Sir, my parents were born poor and I am not ashamed of it.

The National Housing Corporation has to exercise its discretion when there are cases of hardship to address them. Sir, if you hear only one side of the story, you would get the impression that the Ministry of Housing is being governed by social class, that I am using the Ministry to unfair poor people in this country and I would never do that. I deprecate the fact that the Member in his selfishness would seek to portray me that way. I have put the fact before this Chamber and before the public so that they can make a decision on who did the right or wrong thing.

Sir, there were two units available in the Ivy. The Member received one and the other one went to that family in those circumstances and I am asking the public to judge it.

Sir, I am sorry but I am really very upset and angry at the way in which I have been attacked with such falsehood in this Chamber out of pure selfishness by people who seek to defend their egos as defenders of the poor and seek self-aggrandisement by appearing to be defenders of the hopeless by not putting the truth before the Chamber and telling who the hopeless really were in the circumstances.

Sir, they portray be a middle-class oligarchy. What clothes do they wear except those of falsehood and deceit when they seek to put facts before the Chamber which are other than the truth? How do they expect to defend the poor and destitute when they parade only in their clothes but put the garments off when it suits them. They can seek to gloss their reputation however they wish but I am only going to put the facts before the Chamber and let the Chamber judge. Sir, I would have remained silent and never expose what my colleague did to the public until he attached me in this Chamber today.

Sir, with your permission I move to the broader context of this Second Reading speech and to locate the role of the Ministry of Housing in these Estimates. Sir, I have sat on the frontbench and backbench but wherever I sat I made it clear that I know who my constituents are. The constituency of St. James South is comprised of poor. Equally it is comprised of middle-class and those who are well-to-do and I have to understand the interest of each group. While it has become popular for politicians to curse the middle-class and the rich, the reality is that they are Barbadians who pay taxes. Sir, many middle-class people live from one salary to the next with the level of taxes they pay in order to carry the social services we have put in place for the poor.

Sir, no one has to tell me about being poor or rich because I have seen, through the grace of God and political decisions made in this country, my own social circumstances changed over the course of my lifetime and I can speak equally for the poor and destitute as I can speak for the rich.

Sir, I was born to a man who was a tailor and a woman who was a maid and today, they are successful black business people and I am proud of it. Hence, I take my responsibility in carrying the Ministry of Housing very seriously because I recognise that there is a transformative role that this Ministry has to perform. We have to attempt to provide a social safety net for those who are homeless and in dire circumstances. Equally, we must provide an opportunity for them to own a piece of the rock for those who have access to funds and can afford it.

We are selling, at one stage, joint-venture programme houses at what some might regard as high cost in order to subsidise the rest of the services for the poor. Sir, prior to the sale of the joint venture programme, there were 4 100 housing units in Barbados. It is anticipated that about 2 800 will be sold and this leaves 1 300 in the rental pool. The National Housing Corporation gets an average of 900 applications per year for rental units and only five to ten units become available each month for rent so that when units become available even when they are in the constituency of the Member for St. James South even though she is the Minister, she cannot get all the units because, given the small number, the demand is such that other people also have to be brought into her constituency.

When the Member speaks about importing social problems into his constituency, there are not his social problems but the problems of all Barbadians because when the society is in social crisis, it is not the fault of any single individual or any Member, it is the responsibility of all to seek to avert that crisis and change the circumstances of that family and take them out of poverty so that their children can know what it is to walk with a degree of dignity.

Sir, there are applicants from the courts who write to tell you that they have eviction orders to put out people, from people with AIDS, from the Urban Development Commission and from Rural Development Commission and from Members of Parliament. There are 900 applications per year but, Sir, only five to ten units available per month. Does this mean that a Member who has a housing estate in his constituency can and should have access to all his units no matter the circumstances of the other Barbadians? Are they not entitled as well? Sir, it is not ministerial absolutism but egotistical absolutism that we are seeing here in this case.

Sir, I am sorry that I am so emotional about this but I feel strongly about it. I have to restrain myself not to let the charge of emotion and anger which I am feeling over this unwarranted attack be displayed. I am not in a place where I can speak with the strength of language and the descriptions which would be accurate for the Member so therefore, you are seeing me restrain myself. Sir, people believe that the louder they bark, you would be afraid of them but I am not afraid.

H25/15:40

Sequence 79

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of... Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

..the fact that the terrace units are being sold, and the Member for St. Michael West spoke about this in his remarks yesterday, there may be some challenges which the elderly encounter but National Housing Corporation has put a special arrangement in place for them. Sir, outside of that, under the programme, elderly members can join with younger family members to get mortgages.

Sir, the issue in relation to the sale of terrace units is not what dollar value you put on the rent, that is a technical economic point. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for me the one issue is, that sale and price at which people are getting units represent a good deal. The answer is yes it does because the smallest piece of land now costs in the region of \$26 000 to \$30 000 or more. Sir, for you to get a three-bedroom house

between \$125 000 to \$20 000, valued at \$50 000 or \$80 000, does represent a good deal.

Sir, different parties would have approached the policy in different ways but the fact that as a result of this policy, a number of people who would not have access to low-income housing - let us face it, low-income housing is sold at very high prices in Barbados, not just by Government. People who would not have access to low-income housing for purchase, now have a real opportunity to own a house at sums close to \$20 000.00.

Sir, there are those who are recent tenants who might pay more. In many cases people who live in the units in The Pine are getting their units for \$5 000.00. A motor car cost more than that in today's market. Let us not try to tell people not to buy the units. Let us encourage that class of person who had no hope of owning a home. Let us encourage that old lady who believes that she would go to her grave without ever owning a property and having been a tenant all her life. Let us encourage them to embrace property ownership at these prices. Sir, Let us ignore the fact of whose policy it is. Bajans who look like us will benefit from the policy. Let us encourage them to become property owners.

In respect of low-income housing, I have already expressed the view that it is not fair for a low-income house to be sold at \$105 000 to \$110 000. I have, therefore, instructed the Board of the National Housing Corporation to set up a committee because a number of people have written to us indicating that they have alternative building systems or that they have a system that can mass-produce houses very rapidly and there are many people who have indicated that they can supply houses at around \$60 000 and \$70 000 per house.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will use the money that we are getting from the joint venture programme and from the sale of high-priced land to subsidise the land for this low-income project and ensure that all of the houses come in below the \$100 000 mark so that maids, National Conservation Commission rangers, gas station attendants and the class from which I came originally will be able to afford houses in Barbados.

Sir, let us understand that with the advent of the 100 per cent mortgages, even with the sale of the terrace units, it now means that young people can for the first time buy a house because they are not required to accumulate a substantial deposit, that is what it means. At the age of 22, once you have a steady job you can walk into certain finance institutions and buy a housing unit.

Sir, rather than waiting until you reach the age of 50 to become a homeowner, by the time you reach age 50 you can own two or three properties because this administration would have given you a start.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while criticism has been made about the joint venture programme and some of the prices of houses, it is the revenues from those sales that will subsidise the low-income housing projects that we are attempting to carry out. We have to understand what we are trying to do and National Housing Corporation has always provided and made the point about low-income housing. Whether it was at Wanstead, Oxnard or other areas throughout Barbados, the National Housing Corporation has always provided low-income housing. The notion that National Housing Corporation has lost its way when it provides low-income housing is false, especially when the funding from that housing is being used to subsidise low-income housing.

It has also been purporting in the Manifesto that concessions will be given to people who are involved in the building industry at the level of construction in order to give further impetus to the sector. This vision of creating a property-owning democracy - make no mistake about it, there are two dreams that Barbadians have, to become educated and to own their own house. This vision of the Barbados Labour Party to create a property-owning democracy at all levels is something that is very important to our social policy.

Sir, our greatest resource in Barbados has been our people and our greatest investment has been in our social capital, whether it has been in education or health and equally, it must be so in housing.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

There is a slogan that says 'No one must be left behind'. In housing, each one matters and a roof over every head. There is a social framework within which we place the housing policy and it fits within the context of the larger Estimates because it seeks to deal with the issue of how we provide shelter and support for the people of Barbados. We educate them and place them within the Edutech project to make them equal to the challenge of globalisation and fitting into provision of a service economy of creating opportunities for their talents to be exported and revenues to be repatriated.

Sir, we have placed housing in the context of creating shelter for all Barbadians of every social class except, of course, the very wealthy who can go into the market and buy a \$1 million property. The National Housing Corporation is catering to them.

Equally, we have determined that a vibrant economy is one which promotes activities of the small business man, the new entrepreneurial class that wants to be self-employed and to help employ others. Sir, we have seen a new regime of social legislation that deals with the development of small business that puts funding and protection in place for them, that gives them relief at the level of taxation et cetera.

Therefore, we need in this context to ensure that the debt is manageable and that the deficit can be controlled and we are clear on how we are financing the deficit and other elements of the economy.

Sir, what the Prime Minister has attempted to do, as I see it, is not only to include only those abuse us but to ensure that we create a society where all have a place and where there is an environment of nurturing to allow entrepreneurial and related activity to emerge.

H25:

15.49 p.m.

Sequence 80

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

3:50 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

It is in the export of services and business coming out of this protection for the small business sector that is going to help to grow the economy in a globalised world and in a globalised market. We have to prepare our business sector to understand the challenges that come with the loss of protectionism, and give them opportunities and make them ready to compete in the international marketplace.

One only has to look, Sir, at how housing has contributed to the growth of the mortgage market in Barbados, because construction has the capacity to give great impetus to the economy. When construction is booming in Barbados traditionally, you always see the peaks of the economy rising.

When tourism is doing well as it is now, you will see construction going on in that sector, and the Member for St. Michael South spoke today about the new applications and the new construction going on in the tourism sector. I want to share some of the figures that would allow you to understand the growth in the mortgage market and what is happening in housing.

In 1993, the mortgage market was \$17.195 million. By 1998 it had moved to \$32.936 million. In 2001 the growth had gone up to \$105.764 million and in 2002 it had moved to \$122.814 million. There has been phenomenal growth over a ten-year period which gives an indication, Sir, of the kind of activity, and it is a fact that some of the economic indicators show that they are slowing down in certain sectors.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

My colleagues are urging me to repeat these figures and I will.

It is a fact that this economy has been so well managed, that when post September 11th 2001, others floundered and other economies, larger than ours, went into total crisis, the Barbadian economy still continued, not without challenges, on an even keel, taking our people forward, upward toward our aspiration as a people to be the smallest, most developed black nation in the world.

I want to say and make the political point that we cannot achieve our goals by cutting one another's throats and going for the jugular. It cannot work. Where we have challenges, we sit down and work them through but we do not get up and behave like we did today. Today, we cursed the living, and last week we cursed the dead. I am speaking specifically of the Member for St. Michael East, and people know what I am saying is true.

Sir, we have to resolve these issues, if we are to function as a unit focussed on the issues of concern to the people of Barbados. The point is that we have to work as a unit to make sure that the people in Barbados, wherever they are born, are able to achieve the benefits that our policy agenda wants to make available to them.

Sir, there has been a building boom in Barbados that, even where there have been international

difficulties, you can see that in 1993 the mortgage market was at \$17.1 million, by 1998, it had moved to \$32.9 million, by 2001 to \$105.7 million, and by 2002, \$122.8 million.

The Member for St. Michael South spoke about tourism. The Member for Christ Church East spoke about what is being attempted in education. The Member for the City, I believe, spoke about the issues relating to foreign trade and the challenge which Barbados is facing in the international arena.

Sir, as we seek to redefine how Barbados does business, it is not only how we do it internally that will become important, it is how we face our external challenges and deal with the new rules of the international trade organisations, some of which disadvantage us, that will help to determine our ultimate future.

That is why, Sir, within the last month, I laid in this Chamber, in my capacity of Minister of the Environment, a document called the National Commission on Sustainable Development Policy. I hope that one day, we will get the opportunity as a Parliament to discuss it. Civilisations, past historical experience teach us, have done well and then have floundered but it for us, a black civilisation and post colonial and post slavery society, to determine what we want the future of our people and the future of our society and economy to be. In fact, the answer to that is, if we are not to flounder and truly lose our way economically or socially, we have to be certain about whom we are as a people. We cannot carry around chips and boulders resulting from which we originated.

The issue is where, as politicians, do you want to go, and where do you want to carry your constituents with you. Truly, they are not interested in your personal chips and your personal difficulties, where you reduce everything to a class consciousness answer. Life is not like that. They are concerned to find out how you are going to address your issues, whatever the challenges. The people of Barbados want to know from us, as a Government and from the Opposition also, how you are going to deal with the national, regional and international issues which confront us as a people.

The answer has to be that whatever we do, we have to frame it within the context of Barbados' sustainable development.

Yes, there is tourism, predicated on the exploitation of our natural resources but it reaches the stage where those resources can be over exploited, so that the very revenue stream or foreign exchange earnings are jeopardised.

Yes, we go off at the level of international trade and business and negotiate treaties but we have to move from the level of negotiation to taking the implications of those treaties into the communities and business houses, so that they understand the implications of our signing on the dotted line for their business.

What does it mean to the fisherman in St. Philip North or St. Philip South? What are the implications for the man who is building furniture in Grazettes? What does it mean for the farmer in St. Joseph who may have milked his cows earlier in the day and wants to supply milk to an agency which has to export it and must therefore meet certain international criteria and labeling standards? When we sign on the dotted line, it is not only about travel, it has implications for them.

It has implications for the man in Haynesville as it does for the man in St. Michael East. Let us not fool ourselves about that, so when we talk about sustainable development, how do we ensure that we set ourselves on a path of economic growth which does not jeopardise any sector of the economy, which does not so over exploit our resources, or alienate any of our people, whoever they are or wherever they come from? How do we ensure a better life for all of our people?

House 25, sequence 81, 16:

0014

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Sir, the Estimates laid in this Chamber under the direction of the Honourable Member for St. Peter seek to put Barbados on a sustainable path and not on a reckless frolic, and I am happy to be part of that exercise.

Sir, while I hold this portfolio, I, together with the Board and Management of the National Housing Corporation and the leadership of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, would ensure that equity and not selfishness guides the distribution of housing whether it is in the allocation of housing units or in the allocation of houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am satisfied that this Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment is making a substantial contribution to the economic development of Barbados. I commit to the people of Barbados, including that class from which I came, to giving it my best shot.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to add my support to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2004-2005.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not speak to the economics of these Estimates in the same way other Honourable Members have tried earlier. Indeed, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West did not impress me at all. As a matter of fact I was left with a terrible headache. You would think that when you are ill you would have to go to the doctor, but I am ill because the doctor made me ill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter and the representation that was made yesterday regarding the healthy state of this economy. I am sure that the policy initiatives outlined by this Government have so far been very successful. I heard from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central earlier and I will touch on a few of the points that were mentioned by him but I would wish to make some other highlights before doing so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Barbadians have now reached a standard where their quality of life is the envy of others in other parts of the world. Therefore, I want to thank successive Governments for putting

systems in place to ensure that every Barbadian despite colour, class or creed has access to free education, free and good health care, proper roads and to all of the other services that all of us take for granted at times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not only done by the Government. It relies also on other agencies within our society. There are many service clubs and non-governmental organisations that work day and night in the communities helping to shape our people, and I think that is most significant. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we boast about our literacy rate that is so high and about a number of other things, but we have clearly lost sight of our ability to get along with one another and to show the love, the care and the understanding that is necessary for us as a people to continue to move forward. We have lost our ability when it comes to the good work ethics that we all know and the punctuality and regularity that are important to the advancement of our economy and our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not amazed when our regional brothers and sisters come here to work. They work assiduously for the money they earn. So I encourage those Barbadians who are not giving of their best and who are not as productive as they should to tear a leaf out of the book of our foreparents who worked hard day and night, some in the sun, some in plantation houses and some in the stores in Bridgetown, for an honest dollar because I would like that ethic to come back into our Barbadian life and our psyche. People should know there is nothing wrong in working hard and working honestly to make a living.

I am fearful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are losing it day by day. We see it in the stores, in business houses, at the polyclinics, in the bus and everywhere we turn in this country. We also hear it on the telephones when we call certain Government offices. There are still good pockets of productivity showing their heads. There are still good pockets of well-disciplined people but I am afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is too limited. I want Barbadians to get back to what traditionally was a proud Barbadian who was patriotic and loyal and who developed and displayed good attitudes and things of that nature because at this time we are falling short.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every year we spend millions of dollars on education, on health and on other social services and we need to get back some of what we put in. All of a sudden, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our people are going to the tertiary level of education but the snobbery, the pompous behaviour, the talking down to and the insults frightens me and I am tired of meeting those experiences. I can write and talk about experiences every second that is left in here today because I experienced it. I do not believe that because I do not identify who I am when I go places that I should be treated like dirt neither do I think any other person in here should be treated in that manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you go to certain places unless you say who you are, people do not treat you as a good citizen or as a human being. Therefore, we should take note of how our standards are deteriorating and lift them. We can lift them by starting from within the homes and continue it within the schools and all the other institutions where learning is taking place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government's thrust in these Estimates for training, retraining and retooling are significant. Indeed, the educational reform should add value to what will be offered to our students whether they are at the nursery, primary, secondary or tertiary level of the educational system. I speak of the home, the family and the programmes that must be put in place. Mr. Deputy Speaker, no one has

to get a certificate or a degree to become a parent. Anybody can be a parent but unfortunately few parents seem to understand their role and are not transferring the knowledge, the skill, the attitudes and the correct values in their children. It is a sign that frightens all of us. There is no wonder why you hear of so many terrible fights in schools. It is not only the boys, a lot of the girls are having very terrible and dangerous fights. They fight in the bus. They curse and use expletives. It really hurts me to see how we have grown and how we have elevated ourselves educationally and socially but then the common element of courtesy and good discipline is missing.

Therefore, I am happy to see that the Ministry of Education in the curriculum reform and in the attainment targets document, that I am sure is already a document of the House, speak to the kinds of programmes that are being implemented in the schools as the ones that are strengthened to ensure that our children get the benefits of what we consider to be a holistic education that would be a meaningful way of them becoming good citizens, but I will speak to that later.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want also to indicate that as teachers, care givers and others who are working with the human element whether we are in the day nursery, in the school, in the children homes or wherever that we need to get that pastoral feeling that is now lacking. Everybody seems to be crude and cruel. They cannot listen, cannot touch and do not want to interface. That is what is also making a lot of our children become very cruel and develop such bad attitudes to what is being offered to them in the form of education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also something called the hidden curriculum that must be included in any classroom. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central and indeed all other Honourable Members in here who would have had the opportunity to teach and to turn lives around would tell you of what I speak. Our duty is not to have a child come in to us in one way and then he or she leaves us in the same way. Our duty is to transfer knowledge and skills and to help them to develop self esteem and self worth, but a lot of that hidden curriculum is no longer happening.

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4:10 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE:

One would not see that hidden curriculum written anywhere but if we are to develop healthy citizens, then we need to let our children know how to resolve conflict. It is now written in this document but it was never before written anywhere. At school all of us were taught how to resolve conflict; how to show respect for authority; how to show respect for ourselves; how to sit and work sensibly and productively in order to achieve.

Sir, now it has to be written to help our teachers and care-givers how to look after the children who will become the future. Therefore, the hidden curriculum, the pastoral care, and all those other activities must fall in line in order for us to go forward, and to change that human approach. Sir, no matter how

much education we have; no matter how much life we have, if we do not know how to get along with other people, if we do not know how to be productive in this global arena, we will surely be left behind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support every effort in these Estimates that speaks to the development of human capital and helping our people to understand that there is a role for them to play but that there is a cost that comes with it when one reneges one's responsibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make mention of our people becoming multi-skilled. We know that jobs and the economies are changing and in order for us to offer ourselves as a good service-oriented people, we must be able to be multi-talented.

Yesterday, the Member made mention of Intel (Barbados) Limited and other agencies that were here in the past but as industries are changing, we must change and be on the cutting edge if we are to remain current in this changing world. Therefore, the multi-skilled persons are the one to whom we must speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this morning the Member for Christ Church East Central spoke to a number of areas, including the old St. Leonard's Boys School. While I will not go into it in depth, the same point I am making about the human capital speaks to what transpires, not only there but throughout the projects that the Ministry of Education has been working towards. It has been happening in the projects of other Ministries as well, where there are comments about consultants and contractors who take too long to settle accounts; where there are comments about consultants and their slow or poor working ethics. The work that these persons produce is sometimes questionable.

Sir, contractors have also been slow in addressing snags, where when the schools are handed over to the Ministry of Education, sometime windows are not closing properly, nails need to be driven in, there are a number of inferior doors, et cetera. These are snags that the contractors do not even want to respond to, therefore, the Permanent Secretaries are the ones who have to ensure that these methods are satisfied because our children must get the best. When these schools are being upgraded for EduTech, I believe when children return to school, the jobs done by the contractors must be of such a high quality that the they must not have such nuisances as doors and windows not closing and toilets not flushing properly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate that as I speak to you, there are some schools that have been refurbished and within two weeks' time, they are vandalised by the very school children. Sir, there is a true story where a school in St. Michael that was not fully completed, where some of the boys went to the bathroom and because outside was muddy, they tore away the pvc pipe from under the sink and turned the tap on to wash of their timberlands. As a result, the workmen had to go back in and replace the fittings and plumbing. Sir, there are situations where school children walk all over the cupboards, or where they take up furniture to fight each other, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very unfortunate that our people do not know how to resolve conflict unless it is to do with being violent. I believe that families have more responsibilities preparing children for life and, therefore, it is incumbent upon the Ministry of Education, through the Student Services Department, to continue the necessary training for students and parents, especially those students who tend to display violent acts; those who are delinquent; the truants; those who fight; those who curse teachers. They do all kinds of strange things. We must be cognizant of the fact that we have a small

percentage of our population who I would call 'drug babies'. Their parents are drug addicts and they are now in the school system and the teachers are giving up because they do not know how to deal with these children. Some of our children are mentally ill or are schizophrenic and we do not have adequate facilities to accommodate them. The Child Guidance Clinic cannot carry the numbers that we have because you too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know of the prevalence of drugs in our society. The Police Force and other law enforcement agencies are helping to stamp out some of its negative impact, which would destroy the fabric of our society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is some legitimacy in what was being mentioned by the Member for Christ Church East Central but a lot of that I would like to think, would be dealt with during the Head when it comes up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to turn to the Ministry of Social Transformation and to laud the Minister and his Staff for the efforts that have been made to bring comfort to the aged, the disabled, the destitute and the homeless, through the Poverty Alleviation Bureau and other agencies within that Ministry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Community Resource Centres and the way in which these centres are set up, will empower our people, in particular the working class, because they are the ones who would hardly have computers in the homes that their children could be able to develop their skills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy that so many centres have already been established and others would follow. I have been assured by the Member for St. Michael South East, of the extension of the Bridgefield Pavilion for the Community Technology Project, so that the parents in the surrounding areas of Bridgefield and Cane Garden, et cetera, will be able to get the opportunity to assist their children with homework, since the children of Sharon Primary are into one of the night schools and use their computers for homework. It would, therefore, mean that if that parent is not empowered, then that child would not get that assistance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Ministry of Social Transformation the amount of \$500 000 is given in these Estimates towards the homeless. I consider that to be a very interesting initiative because some of those homeless persons are not necessarily so because they want to be. Persons are of the view that they are homeless because they want to be but like other Members almost daily, I have to deal with persons who, for whatever reason, have been evicted and need some place to shelter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also laud the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment for what they have done two or three years ago, in assisting some individuals who have been evicted because the landlord needed the rented spot to build on and, therefore, these persons who were renting had no place to go.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to the area of sports, the initiative that was identified by the Member for St. Peter which spoke to playing fields for every community, is extremely valid. There are many of our youths needing the opportunity where they can go and use their energies in meaningful ways. They need some place where they can play. There are many health-conscious persons who want some place to walk, many of them cannot walk on the street because the streets are busy but these persons can walk around the playing fields. It helps for good discipline. Sir, I heard many Members talking about the various football groups and what is going to be taking place during the week.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have also spoken about your football team from Christ Church and I want to say how football has helped to develop a camaraderie among the locals when they get opportunities to play on fields and not in the roads, and where they can learn to play fair. There are characteristics that are lacking.

Sir, in relation to the indiscipline that one sees in sports,

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Continuation of Miss. C. Y. FORDE:

I am sure that these communities would be able to form clubs that would help to train young people about ethics in sports so that they know how to carry themselves in the various sports and know how to respond to victory and defeat.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak about portable lights as many pavilions need to be lit at night. At certain times in the year it gets dark early and every thing has to be shut down but portable lights will now bring a measure of comfort to some communities so that they can play sport and have cultural activities at night. I think it is an excellent idea and I advise the National Sports Council to ensure there is proper inventory on how the light will be used so that no community will be left out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to see that some aspect of that funding comes to the folks at Bridgefield where the hard court will be placed and that the hard court at Jacksons will be resurfaced to meet the heavy population of Welches, Arthur Seat and the Jackson community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the unfortunate experience of visiting hospitals and the homes of some of the students I taught as young people and unfortunately many of them have passed on because of HIV/AIDS. During the period of illness, they had to give up their job because they were being stigmatised. Sir, those who are no longer allowed to work can now get the necessary training through the Small Business Association so that they can be gainfully employed during their period of illness.

I want to laud the Ministry of Social Transformation through the Poverty Alleviation Bureau for the housing for people living with HIV/AIDS. I have had the distinct privilege of being given one of those houses to help a family. It has served a good purpose because otherwise the family would be living in squalor or on the road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want particularly to speak about those children in the Special Unit. During the last year we established the Special Education Unit at St. Stephen's Primary School as well at Hilda Skeene in St. Philip. Sir, these two agencies have been assisting with students who are mentally and physically challenged and they are not isolated but incorporated into the regular primary school so that it helps to erase some of the stigma that might develop.

I want to laud those parents who are conscious and aware to be able to bring their children to school. In the past, many people kept children at home because they were physically or mentally challenged but we are seeing an upsurge in people wanting to access education.

Mr. Speaker, about 69 children have been brought into the system and even though it is a small amount, it speaks to the whole policy that the Ministry has to ensure that “Each One Matters” and that quality education must reach every individual despite their social standing.

I strongly believe that disability is not inability and once the mainstreaming is done, it will bring more of our children to the fore. The child might have a difficulty in lifting the book to read but it might be intellectually sound and if given the support systems, the child will be able to function to his or her maximum.

Sir, I visited the Challenor School last month and I was impressed with the quality of the education being offered to the students at that institution. Indeed, the Learning Centre is playing its role and I want to thank this Government and a previous Government for the large subvention that is being offered. Mr. Speaker, you would appreciate that many of those students who are physically and mentally challenged are children of parents who have to stay at home to look after their needs because the disability is severe.

Sir, the Ministry of Education has in its budget funding for equipment like spectacles, hearing aids, walking crutches and so on and this is also supported by the Ministry of Welfare.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue testing for impairments, like vision and hearing and the follow-up will continue to take place for children between the ages of five and seven years old.

My final comment is about Project Oasis. It has been lambasted in other forums and it has been said that Government is giving away money. We have individuals in our community, particularly youths, who are unstructured and they need to be pulled together in order for them to be more meaningful. We know that many of them are well-educated but that they do not seem to want to fit into the normal system because they think the system has done them a wrong. We will not leave them out. They are stragglers but it is this Government’s intention to bring everybody into the system and Project Oasis has taken off with a bang.

Mr. Speaker, between last November and now, three youth commissioners have gone into 40 communities to interview young people to ensure that they are aware of what is being offered and bringing a measure of hope to them. Sir, it is a multifaceted initiative and individuals have registered in a number of discipline namely, bobcat operations, 68 males and one female; small business 26 males and 18 females; auto mechanics, 31 males; computer repairs, 22 males and 6 females; digital media film, 15 males and 7 females; small engine repair, 15 males; horticulture and landscaping, 10 males and 3 females bringing it to a total of 187 males and 35 females or 222 individuals within that short space.

I am also happy to let you know that on February 23, 2004, the computer repair course at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic started with approximately 21 individuals who indicated what they liked. Last week, I spoke to a young lady who lives in Wellington Street and she spoke in glowing terms about the course and what is happening. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Government is spending

another \$800 000 that will redound to the benefit of all Barbadians.

Finally, I want to thank the Ministry of Culture. The community at Rock Hall, St. Thomas termed the first freedom village has now been given a sum of money to erect the monument and this has helped to change the lives of the people in Rock Hall and it will change the outlook of the people there because there will be opportunities for them to ply their trade and I am happy for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank the Ministry of Public Works. Sir, Allen View is the road that leads to Harrison's Cave and while other Member speak boldly of the difficulties they have in their constituencies,

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker the people who live in Allen View can do little or nothing if they do not have water. If they do not have a water toilet in their homes they cannot get one at this time because there is a consultancy that has been going on for the last five years which is looking at the expansion of Harrison's Cave. Harrison's Cave is a Gem and nearly every visitor to this island, along with locals, go there on a daily basis to enjoy the beauty that is underground.

Sir, while I believe that my people must get water, they must also get toilets. I believe in waiting and communicating with Government to ensure that when it is done, it is done in the most professional way. Anybody who digs a hole for toilet facilities can cause sewage to seep into the Cave and destroy what we consider to be a good product.

Sir, I am very pleased that the Ministry of Transport and Works intends to refurbish the Allen View road.

Finally, within the last fifteen years St. Thomas has been expanding in population and therefore the attraction of the Polo field at Lion Castle and the needs of the people at Lion Castle are paramount. I want to thank the Ministry of Public Works and Transport for the vision in including Allen View and Lion Castle in these Estimates and I strongly give all my support to these Estimates because at the end day, whether people are in St. Thomas, St. Lucy or Christ Church, they are Barbadians who are paying taxes and the cake must be divided among everyone. Sir, if I get the road somebody else will get a structure. If I get the monument, somebody else will get something else that would help to make them feel proud to know that they have benefitted also.

I am obliged to you.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate. Although I am not feeling well, I

believe that I have a duty to contribute to this debate.

Sir, I listened to the Rt. Member for St. Peter and heard concepts being bandied about transparency and accountability. When I heard those concepts, I wondered whether we are serious about seeking to reform parliamentary scrutiny. I heard the learned Attorney General mentioned the adhering to the separation of powers. There are the Judiciary and Legislature.

We are at a time asking whether Parliament has full control of the Executive. It goes to the concept of openness in government. Certainly, the concept of openness of government is crucial to parliamentary democracy because the masses of this country are asking questions, seeking information and assistance to improve their standard of living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have a right to know how their money is being spent because they work in this country and make outstanding contributions to the development of this economy.

I want to suggest that in many western democracies legislation has been initiated in the form of a Freedom of Information Act. That legislation allows the citizens the right to see the documents of the state. Certainly, documents that form part of national security would be exempted. It is a necessary condition of open government.

Sir, we have heard issues raised about the amount of money that has been spent on GEMS of Barbados and Eastry House. A Freedom of Information Act would give citizens an advance right or notice to inspect or research records or documents, so that to some degree justice will be seen to have been done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this would put Government to the test because there are some checks and balances within the system. We have Public Accounts Committee but the ordinary citizen is excluded from information that they would like to have. The Freedom of Information Act will allow a constant flow of information between Government and the governed. This is the way forward for a parliamentary democracy. It is useless bandying about concepts of accountability and improved transparency when we know that we can place additional mechanisms in place through the form of a Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Member for St. Philip West said earlier in this debate referred to whether the Executive can perform actions without parliamentary approval. We have adopted the concept of parliamentary supremacy of sovereignty. Certainly, any action by a Government that goes without parliamentary approval is contrary to the doctrine of parliamentary supremacy or sovereignty ...

H25:

1640 p.m.

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4:40 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

... and my interpretation of Section 25(A), Mr. Deputy Speaker, although my interpretation would be a subjective interpretation, I would submit, respectfully, that Section 25(A) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, Cap. 5 of the Laws of Barbados, will have some implications for that doctrine of Parliament sovereignty. How do we expect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the masses of Marley Vale, Bayfield, Merricks to feel included in Governmental affairs? It is our submission or my submission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we look at serious reforms to improve transparency and accountability.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in some jurisdictions, Ministers are questioned from the Floor of the House and even the Prime Minister is questioned from the Floor of the House. I will submit, that this is another mechanism that would strengthen our democracy and our Parliamentary sovereignty. The reason why I would suggest question time, is that as the shadow Minister, I would enjoy, if we had that mechanism in place, questioning the Minister of Labour, about the performance of that Ministry throughout those ten years.

I would submit that all we heard from the Minister of Labour, we have no indication when the legislation to formulate policy with a view to promoting rights at work and enhancing employment conditions, will be implemented.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes, we had a number of Ministers. We had some promises about pieces of legislation. I perused the 1991 Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party and all the other Manifestoes and it is in there, the promise to enact pieces of legislation to improve the rights of workers and to improve the condition of workers in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can recall sometime in August 2002, the court marshals described their own workplace as condemned and dilapidated and, today, they are still in that building, on Roebuck Street. The question is how do we ask or request our workers to improve their productivity, when the working conditions are not the best.

There is promise of an Employment Rights Bill, a Health and Safety at Work Bill, and a Sexual Harassment Bill. These are all proposed legislation. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was suggested that the Health and Safety at Work draft Bill still reflected the old Factories Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to find out from the Minister of Labour, the current status of those types of legislation. On many occasions, the workers have to plead with this Government for improved conditions. What impact or effect this will have on the industrial relations climate in this country?

Further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what about protective safety measures for our female workers who are exposed sometimes to hazardous chemicals. What about those workers who, day in and day out, complain of their working conditions.

Before I move further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say a few words about that vulnerable and disadvantaged group, the disabled. I submit that we must provide an environment for disabled persons to make a contribution to this society and to feel that they are part of this society. I will submit that they should be given equal access to jobs in public facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Disability Discrimination Act was passed in Britain, and one of the basic tenets, in their legislation made it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability.

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Continuation of Mr. M. A. LASHLEY:

So I would urge this Government to look at legislation that would strengthen the rights of the disabled so that they would feel that they are part of this society. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I turn to the issue of housing. I want to submit again that the National Housing Corporation has not shown a presence in the constituency of St. Philip North. Many of my constituents have requested housing or a piece of land. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government speaks day in and day out about a land bank. My constituents are taxpayers of this country and they have a right to be provided with the social services of Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask again about the independent police complaint authority because only recently some of the residents in St. Philip North complained that some of their properties were damaged as a result of police operation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is time that the independent police complaint authority be established and it is time that it be functioning to improve that relationship between police officers and members of the community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke about the marshals and their working conditions but we also need to improve the conditions or terms of work of the magistrates in this country because the role which they play is very important to the administration of justice as they do the bulk of work at the lowest stage so that the high courts of this land can function. There was a promise to have security of tenure for them through the Constitution, but that has not yet happened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to the constituency of St. Philip North, the St. Marks Primary School is in need of some repairs to the roof and to the floor, so I hope the Member for St. Thomas would make a note of that as well as I heard her mentioned the Hilda Skeene School.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have prefaced my speech by submitting that there must improve transparency and accountability to Parliament.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I too am delighted to participate in this Estimates debate. I want to say at the outset that several of the items raised by the Prime Minister in this year's Estimates resonate strongly with the people in rural Barbados more particularly the people in the constituency of St. Joseph.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend those particular matters which are contained in the Estimates that represent the earnest efforts of this Government at discharging its solemn obligations to the people of rural Barbados. I believe it bears repeating that Parliament is nothing if it is not an instrument of the people and if it is not an instrument which is used to serve the common good.

Mr. Speaker, one of the important matters which was raised by the Honourable Prime Minister, which is seen in these Estimates and which has also benefited from some discussion is the prevalence of private\public sector partnerships. I am not going to touch on this subject in terms of off-budget financing or on-budget financing. I lay no claim of having any grasp of economic theory, but I feel I have a grasp of some practical matters, and it in my view confers a significant advantage to Government to be able to partner with the private sector in the way in which this Government has done to carry out projects which are essentially for the public good.

I believe that the private sector in Barbados has worked hand-in-hand with Government over the years particularly during the difficult years of the last decade. Our private sector is matured enough that it has been able, on many occasions, to approach the Government sometimes and on other occasions to have been approached by the Government with a view to partnering in such projects as the building of a complex at Newton, the building of a judicial centre and something that is especially dear to me the building of a civic centre at Tamarind Hall, St. Joseph.

This Government is clear in its mind that it must continue to deliver all the important goods and services to the communities across Barbados.

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5:00 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, people in the rural districts do not benefit from the compactness from which people in urban Barbados benefit, in terms of having communities that are very far and spread out. It is, therefore, incumbent on us if we are serious, and we are, about delivering goods and services to every Barbadian, that we carry opportunities to the communities.

Sir, certainly my constituents already benefit in terms of having a Civic Centre at St. Elizabeth Village. That facility is very well used in terms of the provision of computer skills and delivery of

computer technologies to residents of those communities. This is one of the examples of taking our technology resources into the country areas of Barbados. It is something replicated in these Estimates and will always stand as one of the hallmarks of this Barbados Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that there is certainly more to be done. As I said, the rural constituencies of Barbados, St. Thomas, St. Andrew and St. Joseph, are spread out across several different parishes, certainly the constituency of St. Joseph includes parts of St. Andrew, parts of St. John, a small part of St. George and parts of St. Thomas and all of St. Joseph. It, therefore, creates considerable difficulty when it comes to delivering services to the people of rural Barbados across such a broad geographical spread.

Mr. Speaker, there is currently a Community Centre at Branchbury. This Community Centre was built at the urgings of a young group of people who were called the Eastern Stars, a club in St. Joseph. As a result of their urgings, a disused public bath was converted to a community centre.

Sir, over the years that community centre fell into disuse, as the particular organisation that had agitated for its development disappeared off the social and youthful landscape of Barbados. It is, therefore, incumbent on this Government that we seek out those kinds of opportunities and bring facilities back into operation. I am, therefore, delighted to be able to say to this Parliament that community centre is now being used as a place of worship by a Church. It is also being used as a place of counseling and has tremendous potential.

We also have several buildings on our landscape, particularly in the case of Tamarind Hall. As soon as that Civic Centre goes in, there are some buildings in my constituency that will become vacant. I want to say through this medium that this Barbados Labour Party has a declared policy of ensuring that buildings which are vacated by Government departments but are owned by the Crown, are not to be left to become decayed and derelict.

We have, therefore, approached the relevant Ministries to having the Post Office at Horse Hill converted to a community resource centre. This dovetails very nicely, in my view, with the stated position of this Government that it will be carrying technological training into the rural districts of Barbados.

Sir, a facility such as the one that we are hoping to create at Horse Hill would become of increasing importance, especially given the expanded residential community which is being created at Blackmans, St. Joseph. Blackmans, as we all know, is going to be the site of 120 houses and with such a large influx of population over a relatively narrow window, this Government wants to ensure that all of the services that go hand-in-hand with community development are in place, hence the importance of having a library at Tamarind Hall, hence the importance of having a new and improved Civic Centre for the people of St. Joseph.

Mr. Speaker, equally important in this year's Estimates is our Government's renewed commitment to agriculture, again seen with particular reference to rural Barbados in our intensification of efforts to renew the Scotland District, a significant part of the East Coast of Barbados, running from St. Lucy in the south, to St. Philip in the north, and covering a tremendous area of Barbados. We, therefore, need to look towards exploiting its agricultural potential in a way that is eco-friendly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the matter of the delivery of technological opportunities to the people in rural Barbados. Sir, in my view, if our country is to successfully compete in today's environment, we have to ensure that our people are well trained. A lot has been said about manufacturing and I will probably deal with that in great detail when the Heads covered by my Ministry are called but I would want to highlight the importance of training in order for us to be able to develop a solid manufacturing base.

I do not think that anyone would doubt that a manufacturing sector is based in large measure on technical skills that are available. Therefore, that is why it is important that the work of the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic in carrying out technical skills training into the communities is going to be significant.

The work of the Ministry of Social Transformation in delivering skills training in technology areas such as computing, et cetera, is of equal importance because they all come together to ensure that Barbados has a well-trained workforce.

Mr. Speaker, we have always to bear in mind that Barbados is not in a one-country race, it is competing in the global environment for business opportunities and for market shares. Therefore, we have to remember that most of the things we are doing, are also going to be done by other nations.

Sir, I recently had the opportunity to visit a company in China, where that company had a total workforce of approximately 25 000 persons. I was informed that more than 75 per cent of the staff were people who had first degrees. Sir, of that 75 per cent who had first degrees, there were several thousand who had received Masters training and approximately one thousand of them had been trained to the doctoral level.

Sir, what this, therefore, means is that countries such as China and India, with a large population base, have been creating opportunities for themselves by ensuring that they provide this century's technologically-trained individuals. Therefore, by providing thousands of trained individuals, they have been able, and continue to be able, to go into markets and attract jobs to those markets.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, when I say to Members that Barbados is not in a one-country race, we have to remember that the same kinds of opportunities that our country is going out there trying to attract to our fair nation, are job opportunities that are being sought after by countries such as China and India, which have significantly larger populations than ours, and which offer employment opportunities at far lower rates than us.

Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly in this House that Barbados has several things to offer, and we continue to highlight those things. The Members of the Opposition have spoken repeatedly about manufacturing underperforming but when one speaks about underperforming, it has to be relative to something. I, therefore, wonder what is the benchmark that the Members proposed to set when they talked about underperforming. If they are talking about manufacturing in Barbados today underperforming, relative to the performance under the Democratic Labour Party administration, I think we would all agree that it is absurd. Certainly, notwithstanding that the numbers of people employed might have fallen, the wages that they are attracting now are higher than before.

H:No. 25 (88)510 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Notwithstanding that the numbers of persons employed might have fallen, the wages they are attracting now are far higher than before and manufacturing continues to make a significant contribution to the economy. Sir, the fact is that relative to global trends, manufacturing is under threat across the globe as more and more countries are positioning their economies to be service economies.

Sir, we have to compare like with like and we, therefore, have to consider that Barbados, with its small population base, its high energy costs, few natural resources, its consuming population and its comparable high labour costs, will present a challenge in a globalising world for any administration. It is, therefore, to our great credit that despite the challenges faced over the last decade, this Government has been able to ensure that manufacturing continues to play an important role.

We have to consider challenges such as globalisation, trade liberalisation, a sluggish global economy and the worldwide impact of 9/11, all these things have to be put into the mix. Despite all these challenges, this administration has been able, through its positive policies to ensure that manufacturing concerns remain in Barbados and that we continue to attract viable manufacturing concerns to this country.

Mr. Speaker, there are some things, in my view, we ought not to apologise for in a 20th century Barbados. The fact is that our labour costs are relatively high but we have to remind ourselves that successive administrations have dedicated enormous chunks of our national budget on educating our people over the years. We have also paid careful attention to the labour relations climate in Barbados to ensure that all Barbadians advance in a measure commensurate with any reasonable standard of gain. In those circumstances where we have educated our people widely and followed good labour practices, it is not surprising that we have in today Barbados, a level of wages that is higher relative to some of our competitors.

These have been the hard-fought gains of our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters and we should not now seek to turn back the hands of time in the interest of attracting job opportunities. Sir, none of us want to see a Barbados where ladies have to go back to work in factories for incredibly low wages simply to be able to say that we are able to compete. Mr. Speaker, we now have to look to see how we, as a Government can reposition our manufacturing sector so that we are able to compete.

I want to report to this House that I recently had an intense meeting with the manufacturing sector in Barbados where they had the opportunity to sit down and discuss with me, as Minister responsible for manufacturing, those issues which affect their competitiveness. At the outset they conceded that there were several things that we as a Government were not in a position to influence.

Sir, the Government can hardly influence the impact of energy costs. Members of this House might

be surprised to know that many of our large manufacturing concerns no longer rely on electrical supply from the Barbados Light and Power but have long ago taken the initiative to invest in generators to source fuel oil at significantly low prices and run their manufacturing entities with energy costs that are significantly lower than they would have paid had they been relying on electricity supply from the Barbados Light and Power.

Mr. Speaker, today we have a class of manufacturing entrepreneur that has not been sitting back waiting for Government to provide opportunities for them to ensure that they can compete. Instead, our brave manufacturers, weathering all of these storms, have put measures in place to ensure that they are competitive regionally.

We recognise that the challenge is not yet overcome because when we enter into the arrangements of the FTAA we will be faced with another wave of challenges and equally, we will be faced with another wave of opportunities. This Government is making every effort to ensure that our manufacturers are able to retool and face a globalised and highly competitive environment. This Government has to its credit the fact that it has taken a decision to source as many locally produced goods and services as is possible.

Sir, Government is perhaps the single largest user of goods and services in our country. This Barbados Labour Party recognises that as an important driver in the economy, that it has an obligation to all our producers to source such goods as they can from the domestic markets. This Government has taken every effort to ensure that our domestic producers have a high-level opportunity to provide goods and services to the Government of Barbados. In fact, our approach to the whole issue of Government procurement within the FTAA and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy is that we are not going to make any commitment in any of those arenas to open up Government procurement to outside bids and competition and that we are only going to commit to transparency in Government procurement. We recognise that the Government of Barbados, as an important driver of the economy, has an obligation to support those aspects of the economy which it can by sourcing goods and services from local sources in the marketplace. By refusing to commit to open up our Government procurement, we have therefore, indicated to the world at large that we are going to honour our commitment to local manufactures and producers.

This Government continues to finance and to encourage the Buy Local campaign through the 100% Bajan initiatives. We have created the Industrial Investment and Employment Fund to provide \$25 million in financing to help manufacturers retool and equip their factories. We have been very successful in providing funding under the Technical Assistance programme run by the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation to manufacturers who want to retool so that they can become ISO and HCCAP compliant.

H25/17:20

Sequence 89

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of... Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

I want to remind Members that very often in our discussions, competitiveness and competition are terms that we use but businesses have to grapple with competitive issues in a way that sometimes we do not comprehend. As our businesses are being encouraged to manufacture more, we have to understand equally that our domestic market for those manufactured goods is small. If our manufacturers are going to be able to become successful businesses and reinvent in our economy, we have to equip them so that there are competitive in markets beyond our shores, that is the significance of companies to become HACCP compliant and ISO compliant.

Sir, the Government did not only say to them that they need to become compliant. Our Government has provided significant funding in the form of grants so that these companies are able to retool their factories, meeting the highest possible international standards and they can therefore face the world knowing that they are producing products of an equivalent standard as we would get anywhere in the first world.

It is a truism that we cannot have strong jobs if we do not have good businesses. This Government in any form can be criticised for a solid commitment to stand behind our businesses, whether there are in manufacturing, the international financial services sector or the sector that we now call the non traditional services sector.

This Government is intent that when we talk about international business in the future we should be thinking along a broader scope than offshore banks, exempt insurance companies or International Business Companies (IBCs). It has been a constant mantra of this Government that all of our service businesses in Barbados need to see themselves as international businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I was not surprised when I discovered recently that the interment of the Prime Minister of Dominica was put in the charge of one of Barbados' prominent funeral homes. I made this point because when we talk about international business, we sometimes have too narrow a scope. We think only about banks and insurance companies without recognising that international business means nothing more than any Barbadian entity that has a service that can be sold abroad is a welcomed player in our international business sector.

Perhaps, over the years we have differentiated between domestic and international without recognising that many of our indigenous businesses are sometimes operating more in the spirit of the international sector than the local sector. Mr. Speaker, more to our credit, we have architects that are practising across the region and have received commissions as far north as the United States of America. We know that we have our undertakers who are able to ply their trade in jurisdictions in services beyond our shores. Over the years, by virtue of educating our people, by virtue of lifting the standard of skill and ability, we have provided our country with an avenue for true growth over the next half a century.

Sir, it is an avenue that is being built on daily by this administration and it is an avenue that is bolstered by the opening up of the service market through negotiations of the World Trade Organisation, the Free Trade Areas of the Americas and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

The fact is, when we talk about free trade we are talking about a hemispheric framework which will allow Barbados' businesses to ply their services in markets beyond our own with a minimal level of

tariff or non tariff barriers.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Member has two minutes to conclude.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Sir, efforts of a Government must be seen in a holistic way. They cannot be seen as being piecemeal or as little snatch efforts that we are engaged in because we recognise that the commitment of every Barbadian, man, woman, boy and girl, is required for Barbados to be able to pay its way in the next fifty years. We are paying careful attention to our local issues but equally we have to remember that we are operating in an environment that is larger than ourselves.

I look forward as we debate the Heads falling under the portfolio of the Ministry of Industry and International Business, to discuss our efforts at bringing call centres to Barbados. I also look forward to the opportunity to discuss in greater detail the importance of the sector to the Barbadian economy and the solid work that we have been doing, partnering with the Barbados international business association. I look forward to discussing the capacity building that we have been doing.

Sir, I would want to urge Barbadians that they are not to be ashamed of the fact that we have made significant strides and we should not sacrifice those strides on the altar of competitiveness. We are not going to be meeting the requirements of our people by selling ourselves short. We are not going to be meeting the requirements of our people by quarreling about wages because Barbadians have to earn a proper wage.

The world is moving ahead equally as rapidly as we are. Therefore, as this Government focuses on taking our country forward, we cannot be operating from a tunnel-vision perspective. We have to be looking to see what else is happening regionally and internationally. We have measured our success thus far and we are confident that we will continue to do well. We are certainly pleased with our progress and I want to commend these Estimates to this House.

I thank you.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Right Honourable Prime Minister for bringing to this Chamber financing for an improved and expanded social programme. Also, in providing the required safety net for the poor, the disadvantaged, marginalised and those vulnerable sectors of our society to which each Barbadian must pay urgent attention as we now find ourselves in a new globalised environment.

Sir, 43 per cent of the Budget is being spent on the social capital development of this country. I still believe that Government alone should not shoulder all the problems of this country in terms of its social development. I believe that the private sector and other agencies should join Government in terms of dealing with some of the social problems in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to couch my delivery against a background of creating pathways out of poverty. In doing this, I would like to take Members back four-and-a-half years ago when we started on the journey of the Ministry of Social Transformation, which basically was to transform the social

landscape of Barbados and provide the safety nets that I spoke about.

H25:

1730 p.m.

Sequence 90

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

5:20 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Let us look at the vision. Sir, a transformed social landscape that provides ever improving, or equal opportunities for all of our citizens to achieve sustainable and acceptable standards of living and an enhanced quality of life, and the right to fully participate in the overall development of this country, Sir, which, in my view is a practical and a real human right for every Barbadian.

The mission of the Ministry of Social Transformation, Sir, is to contribute to the socio economic development of Barbados and the empowerment of all Members of our society, by fully utilising all available human financial and technological resources, and formulating evidence-based policy, and implementing timely, effective and equitably accessible social programmes and services, through the capacity building and strengthening of institutions.

Sir, let us get right into the Estimates and what is in it for the Ministry of Social Transformation. During the financial year, 2004 and 2005 a funding level of approximately \$76.6 million is being allocated to facilitate the Ministry in the execution of its programmes and activities that cover a comprehensive and diverse social development, advancement, and a powering policy.

Sir, most Barbadians still have not made the connection with those departments that are under the Ministry of Social Transformation and the line ministries. I believe it is against that background, our public relations campaign must be more upbeat. I also believe that the press in Barbados has a very serious social role to play in terms of communication, sensitisation and awareness, so that the ordinary Barbadian would comprehensively understand what is the mission and the purpose of the Ministry of Social Transformation, rather than in some quarters trying to mislead the public about the real mission of the Ministry.

This is the forth time in this Honourable Chamber that I will repeat those departments that are under the Ministry of Social Transformation.

There is a saying, Sir, that there is none so blind as those who will not see. I do not believe that. I believe that there is none so blind as those who do not want to see. This is a serious thing.

Sir, under the Ministry of Social Transformation, we have the Community Development Department, the Welfare Department, the National Assistance Board, the Child Care Board, the National Disabilities

Unit, the Poverty Alleviation Bureau, the Bureau of Gender Affairs, the Urban Development Commission, the Relief 2000 Project and now, Sir, the Research and Planning Unit which will be added to the Ministry.

This is critical, Sir, because institutional strengthening and capacity building are key planks as pathways out of poverty. In addition to that, during the year 2004 to 2005, our Ministry will intensify its efforts to eradicate poverty.

I was listening to the Opposition Leader in a discourse that he had at his Headquarters in George Street. He was speaking to the fact that the Government should remain focussed in terms of the eradication of poverty from this country.

Sir, I would also like to say that the Relief 2000 Programme that is under the Ministry, focuses a lot on the educational aspect of those persons, whom we call school drop outs, who want to continue their education. The Relief 2000 Programme is specifically geared to those types of persons who want to continue their education, in a diverse set of areas, after leaving school.

Sir, partnering and networking is also critical. As I said earlier, the Ministry of Social Transformation cannot survive on its own. We cannot wave a magic wand, as some persons might think, and believe that poverty would disappear from the shores of Barbados.

Additionally, Sir, it is the kind of Ministry that I would sometimes coin in my mind, that if you do, you are dammed and if you do not, you are still damned. The whole process is that we must remain focussed. Therefore, I like to always call the Ministry, in very simple terms, that it is a doing Ministry.

Along the way in doing, we will make mistakes and, Sir, we would also continue to make sure that our fight is for those vulnerable sectors of our society, who really cannot help themselves. Shortly, Sir, we would be bringing to this Chamber, a new set of legislation called the CSO Policy which is really the Civil Society Organisations policy. This really incorporates the NGO sector and the CBO sector which is the non governmental organisation and the CBOs, which are the community-based organisations, what we coin in the Ministry quite early, as well and call it sixth protocol between Government and civil society.

Sir, it is critical and crucial that we continue a relationship with those civil society organisations, because they have contributed significantly to the development of this country. Sir, not only we would be bringing this legislation to Parliament but we have a group of professionals who are looking at the entire rationalisation of the Ministry. It is that kind of Ministry that from time to time, we must be reviewing, so that we could see how best we could position ourselves to deal with the social challenges of this country.

Sir, in addition to that, we will be implementing the information, communications and our PR strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the Ministry and also to improve our relationships with our clients.

Sir, there is still, in my view, a degree of ignorance and I use that in a mild way - about our Ministry, and we want to put out information about the Ministry to enlighten those people. Additionally, we want

to create a regulatory and administrative framework that provides and maintains an enabling and cohesive environment to facilitate the deficient and effective execution of our programme.

This coming financial year, 2004 and 2005, we would be bringing to this Chamber legislation on the Civil Society Organisations, a policy on gender, a revised Senior Citizens Bill, disability legislation, and a national policy on children.

Sir, the Prime Minister, in his presentation spoke about the Government policy of helping those persons who are homeless around Barbados. I must say that at the same time, we are extremely happy that he has presented us with \$1/2 million to push forward this programme.

House 25, sequence 91, 17:
4014

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, on April 4th right over here in Heroes Square we will be staging a massive telethon programme which is aimed at providing a modern facility for homeless persons across Barbados.

In addition to that, we will be working very closely with and assisting the Salvation Army which has begun to build a similar complex in Reed Street. In addition to that, we will be expanding the Black Rock Hostel and we will be turning the Sir Clyde Gollop Shelter into a 24-hour facility with the cooperation of the CSO and non-governmental organisation sector in Barbados. Sir, these programmes are very critical. Because we have some additional technical problems at the Vauxhall Senior Home in Christ Church, we are projecting that that Senior Citizen Home should be open by the end of next month.

Sir, our Ministry is very much involved in the fight of the HIV\AIDS pandemic in Barbados. Against that background, from the 21st to the 23rd of March we will be hosting the very first Caribbean Children Summit right here in Barbados where over a 100 children from across the Caribbean will be coming to Barbados. Sir, I want to use this occasion to compliment the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) which has done a tremendous job in helping us to get this conference off the ground as well as the Ministry of Education, the HIV\AIDS Commission and the Rights of the Child Committee. We are all working together to bring children from across the region to this most important conference. So far about ten regional ministers and the former Miss Universe, Wendy Fitzwilliam will be coming in for the conference. More important, the children who are infected and affected by the disease will be here to tell of their experience. We are hoping at the end of that conference to have the Bridgetown Declaration and also the creation of a number of youth ambassadors in the region on HIV\AIDS. Against this background I must tell you too that we have had wonderful cooperation from the Ministry of Health which has worked with us in a kind of inter-ministerial partnership to make sure that some of these programmes get off the ground.

Sir, we intend to bring on stream at least ten more resource centres during the coming financial year.

We also want to expand the role of the resource centres in Barbados by making them one-stop shopping centres for social services instead of just having them as technological centres. Mr. Speaker, I always pose the question in this Honourable Chamber why should persons have to leave their own community to go, let's say, to the Immigration Department to collect a simple passport form when those items could be right there in the community and be accessible to persons without them having to travel to Bridgetown.

Sir, the coming financial year would see the first ever Minister's best community competition. I must say that there is something special about the community best competition because we want to link the communities into the entire tourism project. So we are getting the communities which would be involved in the best community competition to establish websites at their own community resource centres and then we will link those websites into the Board of Tourism so that when persons arrive on the cruise ships or at the airport rather than them having to go to a geographical area in Barbados that is specifically reserved for them, they will have a choice where they can choose to go in into the communities because the information will be available there to them. We would work very closely with the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport to make sure that the communities which design the best websites are engaged in our concept of community tourism.

Sir, in addition to that, this year will mark a significant milestone in terms of what we call the community tourism projects. So we are hoping that that community-based tourism project in Bathsheba, St. Joseph would soon be open.

Sir, sometimes when I read the Press it angers me sometimes from the point of view that persons love to label the Ministry of Social Transformation as a welfare agency. The same Press publishes the number of programmes we are doing in the ministry but when it suits the particular journalist or who is writing the story, they term it a ministry of handouts or a ministry of welfarism.

Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation came and found the Welfare Department existing, it is now under the Ministry of Social Transformation. So far we have weaned over 2 000 Barbadians off the welfare payroll. I said weaned because we did not take them off just like that. We involved them in an expanded welfare-to-work programme. We provided work for them in the hospitality sector. We introduced some of them to micro businesses and a lot of them are gainfully employed. This year we will see that welfare-to-work programme expanded. In actual fact the Ministry of Social Transformation developed our welfare-to-work programme before the great United States of America because I heard at one time in here Honourable Members referring to the welfare-to-work programme in New York and in other states of the United States of America without realizing that we started that welfare-to-work programme in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, there is a non-governmental organisation in Brazil that is coming on board with us. We are creating an incubator model in Barbados which we will replicate throughout the region so that the other countries in the region would have a model to follow. We are getting private financing for it. We want to bring the Urban Development Commission, the Rural Development Commission along with the private sector and some of those companies which get large Government contracts on board so that we could take those single women who are heads of large households in Barbados and have them gainfully employed. This programme is similar to what was introduced by the Habitat of the Humanities in Australia. We are taking these single mothers of large households and other single women in the

communities and putting them to work in the non-traditional areas of work.

Sir, I want to speak somewhat on disabilities because by now I think you would realise that this whole issue of disability is very dear to my heart. I believe that at some point in time all of us in this Honourable Chamber would be affected by one disability or another, therefore we have placed the whole matter of disabilities as a priority within the Ministry of Social Transformation. During the year 2004-2005, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), we will be hosting a Regional Ministers Conference for Ministers responsible for Social Development in the Caribbean so that we can follow up the commitments that were made in the 1995 Copenhagen Agreement and the followup meeting that was held in Trinidad and Tobago in 1996, something I know the Honourable representative for the City of Bridgetown would be very glad to hear.

Most important, we have contracted a consultant and have already begun the process of establishing a micro business unit for the disabled in Barbados.

House 25 Sequence 92

5:50 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

In addition to that, during the year 2004 to 2005, we will be establishing an Abilities Foundation, which is already on the drawing card. The headquarters for the Abilities Foundation for the disabled will be at the National Union of Public Workers headquarters. This Foundation speaks to the fact that we are providing jobs and skill opportunities for the disabled. The Paper has already gone to Cabinet and has been approved and come 2004 to 2005, Barbados will be the second country to have such an institution for the disabled.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, we will establish an agricultural project at Mangrove, St. Philip. I want to use this occasion to thank the Barbados Workers Union for granting us the two acres of land so that we can develop this agricultural project. Plans are well underway and on Friday when Supplementaries come before this Chamber, we would be able to get the items that are needed, both for the Abilities Foundation and the agricultural project at Mangrove.

Sir, this speaks to the fact that we have a harmonised working relationship, not only with the Barbados Workers Union and the National Union of Public Workers but with the other sectors of civil society, partnering and working with us, as we seek to create and to establish new and innovative pathways out of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, during the first week of May, Barbados and Jamaica will be co-hosting the first Caribbean Conference on Disabilities in Jamaica. The two countries have gotten together and have determined that we want to create a policy on disabilities for the entire Caribbean region. Therefore, what we are doing in Jamaica and in Barbados will be done in all of the other countries because we need a unified approach on the question of dealing with disability.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak, we have established a Subcommittee which is currently revising the legislation that deals with persons with disabilities. We are working closely with the Member for St. James North to establish this legislative framework.

Sir, very shortly we will be establishing a Monitoring Committee to examine the provision of the White Paper. We have already selected a broad based committee on the Monitoring Committee so that those persons would be able to look at Government's performance and since bringing the White Paper, at how far that have we met our commitment.

In addition, we would be introducing new sports concepts for the disabled in Barbados. Most Members would have seen the blind cricket which was very well organised by the Council for the Disabled and the British High Commission in Barbados. Sir, during 2004 to 2005, we want to introduce wheelchair basketball for the disabled. I know the Member for Christ Church East Central will be very familiar with this concept of sports for disabled persons.

In addition, we are working very closely with the Member for St. George North, in terms of making our curbs and sidewalks more disabled-friendly. We are also working closely with the Minister of Public Works who has promised me six new buses that are adaptable for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, recently the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister handed over the keys to the new home of the Barbados Council for the Disabled at the Garrison. Sir, what we are trying to do is to create and to make Barbados the most disabled-friendly nation on the earth. We must have a vision and a dream of what we want to do.

In addition, you would have heard other Honourable Members speaking about the problems which parents of children with disabilities have in caring for them, at the sacrifice of losing their professions. This year, 2004 to 2005, we will be establishing a respite care facility at the Nightingale Children Home. We are making preparation for a similar facility at Barrows Children Home, St. Peter.

Sir, the fact is that we are working towards enhancing the lives of persons with disabilities in Barbados. Sir, very soon we will get the results of the National Census for Persons with Disabilities, which will provide us with better means of knowing how many persons or what kinds of disabilities these persons have, so that we can appropriately plan for them.

Sir, I would also like to thank the Arawak Cement Company for joining us in the Ministry of Social Transformation because this year 2004 to 2005, we will be expanding our ramp programme for persons with disabilities in Barbados. Sir, it is so important that we treat our disabled persons and integrate them into the mainstream of society. The expansion and construction of the ramp programme for person with disabilities is a programme one which we will be concentrating on very heavily.

Mr. Speaker, our Community Technology Programme has been so successful that to date we have 165 persons who have graduated. Sir, of this, 103 or 62 per cent are males and 60 or 48 per cent are females. Significantly, 95 per cent of the graduates were unemployed and 35 per cent entered the programme immediately after completing a secondary education. Sir, all of the participants, with the exception of five, are between the ages of 16 and 25.

Sir, the department has recently sponsored an animation workshop at the Resource Centre and 80 per cent of the participants in the animation workshop, through the Community Development Department were males. This speaks a lot to improving our film industry in Barbados as we go digital. As I said, during the financial year we will be bringing ten community resource centres on stream and it is hoped that we would have community resource centres in every district of Barbados, with the aim of making sure that Barbadians are the most computer-literate in the entire world.

Sir, I want to urge all Barbadians to join us in the Ministry of Social Transformation. We need all the actors on board, such as the non governmental organisations, the private business sector, and the Opposition because as we seek to create a safe society for our people, we must be able to create the necessary environment for our citizens.

H:No. 25 (93)600 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

As I close, I want to again urge everyone to join us at the Ministry of Social Transformation. The Press also has a critical and crucial role to play in informing Barbadians about the role of the Ministry. Sir, 2004/2005 promises to be extremely challenging but an exciting year for the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and wish all Barbadians to join us at the Ministry so that we can charter and plan a course as we continue to provide programmes and pathways out of poverty.

Sir, I thank you.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured as I rise this evening to speak in my first Estimates debate in this Chamber. I am also honoured to be able to speak in the Parliament of a country of which I am immensely proud.

Mr. Speaker, over the past two days, as I listened to contributions from the other side, I wondered if it was the Barbados I know. We were told that the economy was about to collapse, that it was in shambles, that Government had lost its way and did not know what it was doing, that social services were in a complete state of decline, that nothing was being done in housing, that manufacturing was non-existent and we even heard the ridiculous statement from the Leader of the Opposition that longevity was declining in Barbados.

Sir, it got more ridiculous when the Member for Christ Church East Central said that this document was well developed and congratulated the technocrats for it but then the Member for St. Philip West said he did not believe anything in it. This is what we were subjected to over the past two days and it shows the kind of confusion that exists over there.

Sir, I wonder what they are speaking about. Is this the country that according to the Human

Development Report, 2003 is third in this region? Sir, as far as I know, it speaks of 175 countries in the world, the United States of America is rated at number seven, Canada is rated at number 8 and Barbados at number 27. I do not know about the erratic comment that Barbados is first on the Human Development Index because that is not something that comes to this part of the world. Sir, in that document Barbados was also listed as number one among 94 developing countries in this world. Yet we are being told in this Chamber for the past two days that nothing in this country is being done correctly. Sir, the Member for St. Philip West knows that all around us our neighbours marvel at what we have been able to achieve and we should be proud of this.

The Member for the City and the Member St. James Central say that wherever they go on official tours and meetings, people ask them how we are able to do it. They marvel that a small country with no real resources can boast of having a system of free primary, secondary and tertiary education. Sir, that does not exist in the United States of America.

Sir, they marvel at our healthcare system and how we are able to provide free health care for our citizens. They marvel at the fact that in a country like this we can provide open-heart surgery, neurological services and laparoscopic surgery for our citizens free of cost because no where else in this region can this be obtained.

Sir, all of this in the face that all around us in the region we see member countries in a state of economic decline and there is talk of devaluation and IMF measures. We have seen this recently in Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Central America, Jamaica and Guyana yet we are being told that the Estimates are a waste of time, that the economy is about to collapse and that there is no transparency. Sir, I would say that I commend the Government for being able to put Barbados in this position.

Sir, I will not be selfish. I want to say that we must commend the efforts of all Governments in this country over the past 50 years who have maintained their focus and managed this economy prudently.

Sir, it is even more remarkable that two years after a global recession Barbados, like everywhere else was affected and because of the sound economic management of the Member for St. Peter, we have been able to record a GDP of 2.2 per cent.

Sir, despite a predicted deficit of \$258 million or 4.8 per cent of GDP, we were able to report in this document that we had reduced it to \$142.2 million or 2.6 per cent of GDP at a time when the Democratic Labour Party is saying that our economy is in shambles and at a time when the Leader of the Opposition made the ridiculous statement, vis-a-vis the situation with Trinidad & Tobago and Barbados that this is all a smoke screen, a facade and a mirage to hide from the population of Barbados what is occurring in our economy. Sir, have you heard of anything more absurd than this?

The Member for Christ Church East Central often says that we must be serious when we come here to do the business of the people. We expect that the Opposition will be critical from time to time and some would say it is their duty to do this but the Opposition, in times like this should be in a position to give praise where it is due. Sir, in a situation where it was predicted that our deficit would be 4.8 per cent of GDP and we have been able to achieve 2.6 per cent, a decline of 2.2 per cent, the Opposition should be in a position to give some credit but that would require a degree of political maturity which is rudimentary on that side.

Sir, we cannot rest on our laurels and as a country we cannot become complacent. We heard the Member for the City and other members speaking about the issues of international trade relations. We heard from the Member for St. Peter about the commitment which the Member for St. John made in April 1994 under the Uruguay Round which committed Barbados to the removal of certain tariffs, licences and quotas by the year 2004/2005.

H25/18:10

Sequence 94

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of... Dr. J.X. WALCOTT:

We know that all of these discussions are presently ongoing. In these conditions it is absolutely vital that we maintain a system a fiscal discipline and keep deficit financing and inflation levels low.

Sir, at the same time, if I may borrow from physics, we must maintain a state of dynamic equilibrium where in spite of this strict discipline, we must be in a position to maintain our commitment to our investment in social capital in this country. In spite of what the Member for St. Philip West may say about his lack of knowledge of physics and its principles, we have been doing quite well so far. Our foreign reserves now stand at over \$2 billion for the first time in our history. We have contained job losses, whereas all around us unemployment rates are rising and ours is at 10 per cent, better than most countries in this region but we are not satisfied. We said that we intend to do better. We said that we are going to 2.6 per cent and we intend to maintain our achievements and to keep our fiscal deficit at that level.

Sir, in spite of all of this, we still have our obligations.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

We have allocated the Estimates for this year with approximately \$30 million for Edutech, \$50 million for the University of the West Indies and \$430 000 towards the planning of the University College of Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, not so loud, please.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

Sir, bearing in mind what I said about the changes that are occurring in the stage of globalisation and

liberalisation, we all understand that in order for us to survive and to be competitive we must educate our people.

I have heard it being said that the plan is to have at least one graduate in every household within the next twenty years. If we understand, and I am certainly not an economist about financial matters like the Member for St. Michael North West, I am sure that he would understand and recognise that it is said that in the coming years, the issues of trade would be in the areas of capital, technology transfers, information and, indeed, services.

In our country our main resources is our people and we have to educate our people in such a way that they are able to compete globally and be able to make a mark for Barbados. I am sure that the Member for St. Philip West would agree with me that medical services can be traded globally. I do not know if he would want to volunteer his medical services as part of the trade in global services but that is a matter entirely for him.

Sir, \$11 million has been allocated for HIV/AIDS for care, support treatment and the provision of highly active antiviral drugs for all of those who are in need of them, free of cost. Indeed, there is not another country in this region that provides these drugs for those of the society who are in need of them. I repeat, for all of those persons in this country who have need of these drugs, they can be accessed free of cost.

In addition, there are plans to erect a development centre at Ladymeade as part of the care and support of these unfortunate persons who are suffering from HIV/AIDS. Again, cognizant of the importance, realising that HIV/AIDS affects the most productive age group in our country, the 15 to 44-age group, it can have deleterious effects to these persons and to the socioeconomic development of our country.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

Mr. Speaker, \$150 million has been allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in these Estimates. A loan in the amount of \$25 million has also been approved for that institution to provide equipment and a Queen Elizabeth Hospital development plan.

Mr. Speaker, we heard the Member for St. Peter speak about the plans for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, a hospital that has not essentially changed in the last forty years. In this year's Estimates, over \$650 000.00 has been allocated to develop that plan. In addition, there are plans in train for the change of the governance of that institution. I am sure that there will be a time when we will hear more about this.

Mr. Speaker, \$35 million has been allocated to the Barbados Drug Service in this financial year. Sir, for the past year we have not heard any pharmacists complain. We have entered into an agreement with the pharmacists. The first time in over twenty years there will be a new contract. For the first time in over twenty years the pharmacists have been given increases for certain categories of drugs. We will hear more about this later this week.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, please.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

Sir, \$26 million has been allocated for the care of the elderly, a programme that is dear to the heart of the Member for St. Philip West. Indeed, the Member for St. Philip West may be able to benefit. The \$3.5 million which has been allocated for alternative care of the elderly for those people who are looking after elderly persons in private care settings. This is in spite of the comments of the Member for St. Michael North that longevity is declining in Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

Mr. Speaker, \$2.4 million has been allocated this year for the Ambulance Service which will provide for the purchase of new ambulances. We have already heard in the news of the plans afoot where, for the first time in Barbados, persons are being trained to the level of paramedics in this country. In April this year there will be a pilot project for the centralisation of ambulance services, where the ambulances would be based at Arch Hall to reduce the response time in times of emergencies.

I am certain that the Member for St. Michael North west would be very pleased to hear, because if falls within his constituency, that \$26 million has been allocated for the care of the mentally ill in this country.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

I am sure that he would be pleased to see that we are looking at that area of health care and we are paying special attention to it.

Mr. SPEAKER:

What has the Member to do with that?

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

It is within his constituency.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Oh! I see.

Asides.

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

We have heard about the plans for the homeless. Sir, \$500,000.00 has been allocated and I think that it is a start. I am sure that the Government would have to look more closely at that. It is a very good venture. As we go around the streets of Bridgetown, we see persons who do not have any place to sleep and some people would argue that they should be incarcerated within the same institution that I spoke

about but in a lot of the cases they do not have any mental problems.

It is clear that Government has a commitment to the total development of this country. Sir, no group is being left behind. We have made provision for the youth in terms of education - Project Oasis. We have to make provision for health care because the health of this nation is the wealth of this nation.

H25:

1820 p.m.

Sequence 95

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

6:20 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT:

We made provision in this year's Estimates for social transformation, poverty alleviation, the elderly, the disabled, the homeless, those afflicted by HIV/AIDS, those suffering from drug addiction and, indeed, the mentally ill.

Sir, in these circumstances, I can say that Government is obviously committed to the investment in the social capital of this country, realising the importance, if we are continuing to progress and to maintain the status which the UNDP has placed on this country.

In this regard and in these circumstances, I have no hesitation in supporting these measures.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the Estimates debate for 2004, or more correctly, the Appropriation Bill for 2004. Mr. Speaker, there can be no question of the importance of this debate. The very basis of our fiscal policy is to be found in this particular exercise, that is to say how we allocate spending to the various departments of Government and, of course, the chance to develop the policies and strategies that therein are applicable to those various allocations.

Mr. Speaker, it is therefore beyond any reasonable dispute that fiscal policy, for better or worse, is the most powerful instrument at the disposal of an economic manager, in a small open economy. The point I am making is that we are engaged in a very serious exercise. I think it is important to recognise, however, that this is the tenth occasion that this particular Government, under the leadership of the Rt. Member for St. Peter is actually presenting an Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Speaker, if that quotation that I repeated sounds familiar, it should because, indeed, it was said by none other than, the Rt. Member for St. Peter at his first Appropriation Bill in 1995, and you were in the Chair at the time when he spoke about fiscal policy being a powerful instrument. He went on to say that

the distribution of public expenditure, Government's taxation and essential policies, profoundly affect the quality of life of individuals in households, in fact, the distribution of benefits and wealth in the society.

Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, I think we have to ask ourselves a very fundamental question, because he had a chance to wheel this powerful instrument, his words on ten occasions and, therefore, we must now ask if the quality of life that he spoke about improving on the first occasion has had any improvement today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we just heard from the Member for Christ Church South about all of these various types of surgeries that are available at the QEH, but I happen to know, as do you, since our constituencies share a border, that there are people who go for services at the hospital and basic items are absent.

Sir, outlining the list of surgeries that are possible to be executed at the hospital, words that we could hardly pronounce, laparoscopic, and so on, does not matter if you do not have operating theatres that are working. These are the questions, when we speak about the quality of life. You have staff in the Wards that are working under severe stress, and that is the reality.

Sir, in speaking about the quality of life, I do not only want to focus on health, education is another one. Mr. Speaker, 70 per cent of our school leavers are leaving uncertified. That is a very sobering statistic and one that could not be music to anyone's ears, least of all, this House that includes...

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I hate to interrupt the Member, but the Member is misleading the House. The statistics that I have here from the Caribbean Examination Council for 2002-2003 do not reflect that, Sir. There are usually around 4 000 students in the Fifth Form. Last year, there were 4 285 and the number of students entered, because you had Fourth Form students entered, were some 5 596.

Sir, I can give you the number of persons passing four and more subjects were 1 447. Those passing between one and four, 3 081, so some 4 490 would have passed at least one subject out of 4 285 in that cohort in Fifth Form, so what nonsense is the Member talking about, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, please, you have made your point of order.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Were you referring to a document, Sir?

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

I was referring to my notes.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Thank you. Continue, please.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

If the Member said that he was quoting, you would have to make it a document of the House.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Sir, I cannot rise on a point of order to make a point of order, but the Member held up a document and said he was quoting from it and, Sir, I am insisting on a ruling from you. He quoted statistics from it and it should be made a document of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Do not let us delay the House because of that. The Member, you will make it a document of the House, please.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Yes, Sir.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, I would not prolong the unparliamentary behaviour of just now, only to say that I am minded, in reading from his secret statistics what Benjamin Disraeli said, "there are three types of lies, dam lies and statistics."

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order the Member could only, by way of that very awkward quotation, be inferring that this Member is reading lies into the records of this House.

If I were to be as unparliamentary as him, Sir, I could only say that his 70 per cent would represent the statistics, but anyway, Sir, I would ask the Member to withdraw those remarks and have them struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Member, your imputation is clear. You have to withdraw those words, please.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

I will withdraw the quotation of one of the greatest Parliamentarians that ever lived.

House 25, sequence 96, 18:

3014

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, it is still a fact that our education system has been failing many of our young people,

and we cannot deny that.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, we are certainly misleading the House because the Honourable Member for Christ Church East has said that 4 490 students passed out of 4 285. Therefore, I would like to know how more people could have passed than those who sat.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order please!

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order please! Could you continue please!

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, the failing of our educational system is one of the main reasons there are so many young people especially men on the block. It is a very humble submission I am making. If our education system was working a little better at preparing our young people for life a lot of them would not find themselves on the block and Project OASIS would probably not be necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I go on to speak about the issue of housing. There can be no doubt that there is a housing crisis in Barbados. I am saying that if we are serious about using this exercise to impact on the improvement of the quality of lives of the citizens of Barbados we have to have a comprehensive housing policy that genuinely does not leave anyone behind. You cannot be serious about a housing policy that is calling for low income earners to pay \$115 000 for a unit, that is a joke, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment spoke with a lot of passion in here today. I know that she got some lashes from behind and I do not want to give her any from in front, but quoting mortgage statistics and comparing mortgage figures from 1994 to 2004 does not make any sense because property values have galloped out of control and have tripled and quadrupled in some cases since then. I do not want to pile it on too thick on her today because I understand she is a little hurt right now but at the same time I do not think that we need to have those sorts of figures thrown at us again when we must recognise that we have a serious problem in terms of housing. While I am at it, to show you how balanced I am, I would give her credit for the work that she did in terms of the Barbados Sustainable Development Policy Document. I think it is a worthwhile effort and it contains some very interesting facts.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

The Honourable Member did a good thing and I think that Professor Headley, unfortunately he has passed on, and the entire team that was involved in producing that document deserves kudos from us for putting together a worthwhile document that can help us as we try to improve the quality of life of

Barbadians. Mr. Speaker, sustainable development is something that has been thrown around very glibly. This is the first time that we have had a policy document put together, and I think credit should be given to the Honourable Member for St. James South and all those who are responsible. However, I would say that there is some very sobering information contained in that document.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Peter in moving the Bill spoke of the importance of water to us as a society. Indeed Barbados is water scarce. The sustainable policy development document calls for appropriate pricing to be applied to fresh water sources. I just want that clarified to understand if that will take the form of hikes in our water rates because we already have cost of living factors and while it is not Government policy I just want to understand what impact it would have if we are supposed to conserve and protect our limited fresh water resources.

Mr. Speaker, what is going on at the Barbados Water Authority does not really give one much encouragement. We hear that not only are they millions of dollars in debts but they are having industrial problems. Therefore, recognising the value of this resource - the Honourable Member for St. Peter has put some priority in it - I could not speak about the quality of life and not mention something which I consider to be important, that is, our water resource.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on that subject as well I would say that the fact that this exercise also calls for us to prioritize how we spend the public money is something that should concern us gravely. Mr. Speaker, we have heard from Honourable Members on this side with regard to Government playing a greater role or an entrepreneurial role and we welcome that. We welcome the suggestion that perhaps moving from a cash-based to an accrual-based system could redound to the benefit of this exercise. Any initiative to make this exercise more worthwhile is a good initiative. We also welcome the plan to move to multi-year budgeting that will allow us to plan more effectively but, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to understand more about this entrepreneurial role. Mr. Speaker, I was a little perplexed when I heard that considering the treatment of some of our more valuable assets, I speak specifically about the Barbados National Bank and the Insurance Corporation of Barbados, the Barbados National Bank has already been sold. Fifty-seven per cent of the interest has gone to the Republic Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. The Insurance Corporation of Barbados is on the auction block. This is an insurance company that has seen its shares triple in a few years, so it is something very valuable. Surely, if the Government is going to be playing a greater entrepreneurial role they should play that role with entities that are profitable and can make a difference to the average Barbadian. The Barbados National Bank is a case in point. That is a bank that was making \$20 million in profit up to last year. Now, we are being told that the Barbados National Bank had to be sold because it needed a strategic partner in order to survive globalisation. We have had large banks in Barbados for years and smaller banks have competed effectively against them.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order please! Please! Please!

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West who is a former classmate of mine earned some respect for me because in a moment of pristine honesty he admitted that the reason the bank was sold

was because the money had to be put into the Hilton Hotel and into other ventures the Government was doing and he said it was nothing wrong with that.

House 25 Sequence 97

10:20 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, what we have heard from others, including the Member for St. Michael North West does not make sense.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, we need to hear the Member.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, I join wholeheartedly with the call by the Member for Christ Church East Central, for an indigenous financial institution to be part of the financial landscape of Barbados because once again, there is nothing wrong with having a combination of different financial services being offered by institutions varying in size and in scope. That is how it has been and there is no reason why it cannot continue to be such.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Speaker, in looking at this debate, we have to consider an issue of the Fair Trading Commission. This happens to be an area that I shadow.

Sir, in looking at the impact which the Fair Trading Commission has on the average Barbadian, one must consider what is going on there. There is an increase in the vote for the Fair Trading Commission and we sincerely hope that having been strengthened in terms of the number of commissioners it has, and the fact that they are now eagerly trying to seek a chairman, hopefully things could settle down and the Fair Trading Commission could become involved in exercises that go beyond telecommunications.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, it is to become involved in the dispute between Pine Hill Dairy and its producers. We also understand there are some issues pertaining to mergers as well, and we welcome that. We look forward to seeing the Fair Trading Commission getting over these tough times and can start to impact the corporate culture that we want to see become a meritocracy.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this is the tenth occasion that we have been given an Appropriation Bill by this Government and we need to look at it and to use it as the backdrop to access exactly how they are impacting on the lives of the average Barbadian.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to getting into the Heads

and obviously, I want to make a few points as it pertains to general policy during the Second Reading. I want to suggest too that the issue of Barbados' future is something that we need to consider.

The Prime Minister spoke about the debt servicing being up to 36 per cent and I think that the National Debt reaching the very high proportions that it has, is something that should be of concern to all of us. Indeed, the National Debt is now at 75 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but that is an albatross around the necks of our young people.

Mr. Speaker, I have the signal honour of being the person in this House who has been on this planet for the shortest period of time. I am suggesting that while it does not follow that chronologically I might be here longer than anybody else, the point I am making is that the young people are very concerned about this situation of the national debt because we are mortgaging their future. Therefore, I have to say it here tonight because it is a fundamental point that relates to our future. It is a fundamental point that speaks to fiscal policy, of which the Estimates is a principal tool and, therefore, it needs to be said.

Mr. Speaker, we recently had an election and we had heard about a 'Team for the Times' that was coming with a plan for the future of Barbados. Sir, half of the 'Team for the Times' barely got in here by a few votes, and the other half is in the Upper Chamber because they were rejected by the electorate. Sir, I am saying that the future of Barbados that is being mortgaged by these policies of incurring high debts is something about which we need to be concerned.

Mr. Speaker, we need to understand that the people out there are expecting us in here, by our conduct as much as our substance, to hinge hope on the fact that we will have policies that will work to their benefit and that hopefully, the meaninglessness of the exercise of Estimates that the Member for St. Peter has spoken, can be taken out by us as a Parliament, recognising the value of this most important debate and recognising the impact it could have on the quality of lives of the entire Barbadian citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged for this opportunity to speak in my first Estimates debate. Sir, perhaps, I should begin by saying that I had hoped and will not in anyway attack the Member who has immediately spoken. It is perhaps pointless to throw big rocks into an empty mango tree.

Sir, I had hoped that my friend, the Member for St. Michael South Central would have made contact with the Ministry which he is shadowing, even if only to be able to give us something with which to engage, as we sojourn through the night. His greatest success perhaps was that he redeemed the Member for St. Philip West, who sits to his immediate right.

Sir, the Member for St. Michael South Central has made a very important point about the youth. I happen to be one of those in this Chamber who can legitimately make a claim to be in the mid thirties, though I would be in a more advanced stage in my thirties than the Member for St. Michael South Central. The fact of the matter is that when one listened to the presentation by the Member for St. Peter on Monday, it became very clear that this country was being asked to recognise that it was at the cuffs of fundamental change.

H:No. 25 (98)650 p.m.

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, whether we lay claim to having experienced it personally, as the Member for Christ Church East Central lays claim to, or whether we have witnessed poverty, in order to get into this Parliament to deal with the hardcore reality of poverty. Sir, if you see it in a domestic setting, you understand the pain, the hopelessness, the helplessness and the alienation it could cause. If you see it at a district level, it is that more impactful and painful, and at a parochial level it is even more impactful and frustrating. Sir, if you have to deal with it at a national level, you are dealing with what is commonly being recognised in the world as the emergence of a failed society.

The Member for St. Peter said on Monday that we have serious decisions to make which will dictate that Barbados advances, progresses and transforms itself in a positive manner while maintaining stability. He said that the alternative of not getting it right means that Barbados also stands in danger of joining the ranks of those countries which are now deemed to be failed societies.

Mr. Speaker, I make that point because those on the other side of the House spoke with a cavalier approach and demonstrated that there is still a traditional belief that the minimalist view of a Caribbean can continue this country forward. The Member for St. Lucy made the point that globalisation is a construct that we could turn our back against and focus on localisation.

The view that there is a minimalist Caribbean, a set of inward-looking, disparate countries doing everything on their own is a recipe for disaster and a prescription for pauperism.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that I said that globalisation could be ignored and I did not say that, Sir. I said that we need to advance localisation, recognising that we are operating in a globalised world which is completely different to what the Member said. Sir, it is also in the newspapers today, in case the Member did not read it.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Sir, I do myself a disservice by referring to the Member. Mr. Speaker, the issue to which I speak is for this country to understand the relationship between our quest for development, its association with

the concept of cooperation and to recognise the inescapable linkage between those concepts and the rules of international trade.

A classic example of this was manifested very recently when persons, lightly and glibly, sought to dismiss positions which Barbados took vis-a-vis a CARICOM partner as being tit-for-tat. As recently as Monday, the Barbados Business Authority made reference to a statement coming out of Trinidad & Tobago by Arthur Lockjack talking about the Government of Barbados being whimsical and fanciful.

Sir, this is not a question of partisanship because the Democratic Labour Party took this country to the point where we were going to enter into at Grand Anse, a revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. We have been handed the responsibility of carrying that forward to the implementation stage so it is not a question of partisan divide.

Mr. Speaker, it is a reality that we have been locked into a rules-based method of progress which has a core set of rights and obligations on a reciprocal basis across the Caribbean which are subjected to an element of compulsion and we have to get it right.

When we seek to understand what Barbados had done by the implementation of monitory licences, we are effectively saying that we are taking a legal position which we are entitled to take as a country in the defence of national interest so as to advance interest and rights under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Unfortunately, there was another comment by the Leader of the Opposition which suggested that there was an unwillingness to get away from this minimalist view of the way in which the Caribbean is expected to work.

Sir, we must understand something, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy operating as it does now under a revised treaty has certain limitations in terms of legislative provisions which guide us. In the absence of being able to do better at this stage, we have to revert to the international trade rules which govern all things that are taking place between member states of the WTO today. Sir, people here at home are challenging the Government on the basis of trying to assert that we have implemented something that we ought not to implement. We hear people who ought to know better speaking about quantitative restrictions being implemented, we have to go back and make it abundantly clear, that under the WTO's agreement on licensing procedures, all states have a right to implement the types of licences we have implemented.

Sir, it not a quantitatively restricted situation, it is known as an automatic licence. The whole purpose of it is to give a member state an opportunity to implement a number of provisions that it may seek to do in its own national interest.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday, this House was treated to a two-hour exercise by the Leader of the Opposition in which he talked about a sluggish manufacturing sector and sluggish agriculture performance. What is the benchmark against which we speak to this sluggish performance because to get us to an objective standard, there must be a measurement? Sir, the tool to get the measurement, is the licencing system because you are collecting evidence and data on imports into the country of a certain type and this gives you an opportunity to assess the effect that those imports are having on your

competing domestic sectors.

H25/19:00

Sequence 99

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Continuation of... Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, there are also those who would have us believe that there is a short cut to turning around agriculture and manufacturing. The only way in which we can begin the process is if we understand whether or not we have to use the rules of revised Treaty to have safeguard mechanisms put in place to protect sectors that are suffering as a result of the exercise that we are undergoing. I want to repeat that for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition.

Sir, for the length of time that the Leader of the Opposition spoke he did not make contact with the fact that you have to have an objective standard and you have to reach that objective standard in order to know whether or not we can legitimately seek to give additional protection and sustenance to critical industries in Barbados.

Sir, a few weeks ago, I had the regrettable opportunity to make a Ministerial Statement in this House with respect to an action that we commenced against the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago under Part XV of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. We are now one month down the road and I have a duty to say to you that Trinidad, today, has officially notified that it has appointed its Arbitrator, Mr. Ian Brownlie, Q.C, CBE, Agent, the John Jeremy, Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, and Co-Agent, Mr. John Almada of the firm of Russell Chance.

Sir, we are locked into a process from which there will be no departure. Having said that, as part of which we are doing to advance this region, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade has sought to work assiduously, including with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, at trying to get the Caribbean sea to be a zone which can be sustainably developed, properly managed and the living resources of that zone are properly harvested and exploited. We have carried this lobby to the United Nations and we have carried this lobby to the Association of Caribbean States. It is a commitment which has been shared with us by other territories of like minds, like Guyana. I should take the opportunity to say that since the last time I was here on the matter of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, Guyana has introduced a similar measure against Suriname.

There was nothing outlandish about what Barbados did. There was nothing preposterous or threatening to CARICOM. A perfectly legitimate process was followed and has been duplicated. Perhaps, I should take the opportunity to say that, I would not think it proper to go into it here but it concerns the national security interest of Guyana. We did not mention it publicly before but on December 2, 2003, Barbados entered an exclusive economic zone cooperation treaty with the Republic of Guyana. The purpose of that cooperation treaty was to enable us to share that area of overlap between our two exclusive economic zones so that we can collectively harvest, develop and manage the resources of that region and without prejudice to any other state's interest.

There is significant value to that treaty as well because it also serves to reject categorically the boundary lines drawn by Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela in the highly disputed 1990 treaty.

I also want to say that it serves another legal purpose. Professor D.J. Harris who wrote the very famous text on international law would indicate that a state should display its sovereignty and should do so peacefully without any implicit or explicit recognition of any third party competing claims, and we have done that.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to this region goes further. We have literally, in a month by month, year by year, basis since the year 2000 been trying to bring the people of Barbados and by extension people in the Caribbean to a Christian and clear understanding of that which we are getting ourselves into when we speak of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. It is vitally important. The manifestation of how important it is was reflected when I was speaking. We are really dealing with persons who do not or will not try to understand or wrap their minds around that which we speak.

A few weeks ago I heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about Protocols in the Treaty of Chaguaramus. The Protocols was in the draft stages. Changes of substantial nature have taken place between the draft and the ratification. We are now talking about Articles. He should not shield the document from his tender eyes because there is nothing in it that is so horrific but should become acquainted with so that he would not come on the Floor of the House and boast about being ignorant of matters that touch and concern these issues.

Sir, we have conducted a process of public education. I am prepared to share this document with the House if called upon to do so. In the year 2000 between January and June there was a literal six-month blitz on trade information, an overview of the World Trade Organisation, our relationship with the African, Caribbean and Pacific, European Union and Barbados' international trade relation that continued into 2003.

In this year, 2004, we have already launched the Barbados Private Sector Agency partnered by CIDA, for funding and a consideration injection from the Government of Barbados, and above and beyond hosted four workshops on our relationship with the World Trade Organisation. Sir, we were speaking to critical issues which caused people's eyes to glaze over, such as agriculture, services and intellectual property et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it is incumbent on me to go further on the question of education because it is a source of tremendous regret that six Members of the Opposition could have contributed to this debate, when the parameters were set very clearly for all to understand that, perhaps, one of the most - in fact the Prime Minister begged for the Head of Foreign Trade to be called, not one of those individuals on that side condescended to join, by sharing with this country the views of the Democratic Labour Party on any aspect of any part of the theatres of engagement that we are now in.

Sir, it is a crying and burning shame. The only thing more preposterous than that was for some of their key members to associate themselves by way of education on the matters in which we involved when a public exercise was held.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the education process is something that the Ministry must commit itself to. As the Member for The City of Bridgetown said, it is really the private sector that trades. It is not the Government. Therefore, there has to be an ongoing association with the private sector. I said private sector not meaning only the Chamber of Commerce. It has to speak to every entity in Barbados, every person in Barbados, be it corporate or individual, who believes that he, she or it has a good service to sell abroad.

H25:

1910 p.m.

Sequence 100

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

7:10 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Therefore, the engagement has to be ongoing and it has to be specifically so on some areas which are looming large and immediate.

Once such area, Sir, is the relationship that we will have with Europe, under a new economic partnership agreement. Sir, people have to understand that we are about to launch that new relationship. It stands to reason that we will be transforming and transmogrifying the relationship we had with Europe for the last 2004 years of our existence.

Asides.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Sir, the reality is that people have to understand that we are trying to develop a negotiating structure. They have to understand that there will be a mandate for us to clearly define our objectives.

I perhaps tease the Members on That Side, but I really do hope that out of this exercise in these Estimates, will come ideas and views which will help to contribute to the objectives that the Democratic Labour Party represents, or would want to see held dear in an exercise such as this.

The Leader of the Opposition would know that I am not saying this because I am on my feet in here this evening. He will have to confirm, I believe as a man of God, that he and I have held discussions on the issue of trying to get Members on That Side to sit with Member on This Side, in both houses of Parliament, so that we would be able to reconstitute a Joint Parliamentary Committee to deal with this critical issue, that is a fact.

Sir, when we talk about public education, we also have to understand that the objectives which we will decide upon as a region, are not just going to be pulled from the sky, but they have to be drawn from assessments being made on the impact of this liberalisation process.

Again, during the course of the last two days, I am not hearing anything coming from the Other Side of this House, Sir, that suggests to me that there is an appreciation of the impact. I am not hearing, Sir, any talk about the areas of potential dislocation. I heard the Leader of the Opposition vaguely make reference about the capacity building but then, he left it as soon as he touched it like a fly lighting on something pleasant.

I have not heard anybody on That Side, Sir, speaking of potential areas of a revenue shortfall. More important, how do we go about structuring into an economic partnership agreement, these critical concerns and potential solutions to those concerns. Those things would represent the core, the indispensable conditions of the economic partnership agreement that we are hoping to draft.

Similarly, Sir, the people of Barbados and by extension, the region, have been urged, lectured upon, and will continue to be lectured upon, and assisted in coming to an understanding of what we mean when we talk about expressing differential treatment. It rolls off people's lips very easily, but often you do not get the impression that people fully grasp the differences, in levels of development, between countries in this region and the European countries.

I think the point needs to be made, Mr. Speaker, that the European Union, as you would know well, emphasises free trade and liberalisation. On the other hand, we here are emphasising a developmental agenda, and those are issues which we would want to be able to make contact with, when the Heads are called.

More extensively, Sir, within the next few months, we would also be about to begin a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA is going to be completely re dimensioned from the way in which we originally envisaged it. The learned and able, the Senior Minister, spoke to some of that today.

The fact of the matter is that the re dimensioning of the FTAA means that for the first time, there may be a core set of disciplines and another set of disciplines that are spilt over. Barbados' national interest must be to look at all the disciplines, and come to an appreciation and get our business people to appreciate the value of remaining engaged in all of these discussions.

Mr. Speaker, there is a whole host and raft of important issues that we must be dealing with. It is not likely, Sir, that the passage of these exercises is going to be entirely smooth, but what is an indispensable condition in my view, is that debate in this House must reflect an appreciation and a willingness to engage in these matters.

What transpired before I got up, Sir, was disastrous. I would honestly hope that Members on That Side go home tonight, take a hot bath, sleep, wake up early in the morning, pick something to read, because none of them have demonstrated a willingness to read before they come in here, and let us begin tomorrow by taking fresh guard.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Members, just before the suspension is taken, I just want to clarify a point coming from the Member

for St. Michael North West. A rhetorical question had been made, relating to what was said by the Member for Christ Church East.

I allowed the question, so it is in the record. I think it is only fair to allow the Member, if the Members of the House so allow, to state exactly what he said because this will also be in the record. I do not think it would be fair for what the Member for St. Michael North West said, to go in the record and not what the Member said.

Sir, could you give us what you said, only, please.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Michael North West has a copy of the document. It indicates that by way of a summary, that in terms of two...

Mr. SPEAKER:

No. I only want, relating to the statement, how many were entered and how many passed.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Yes. Sir, the numbers entered were actually, 5 596, because the Member was asserting that I was claiming we had more passes than students entered.

Mr. SPEAKER:

How many passed?

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Around 4 000 passed.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, we have come to the end of today's Sitting and I ask that this Sitting be now suspended until tomorrow morning at 1000 a.m. when we will continue. I remind Members, once again, that the Sitting begins sharp at 1000 a.m., as there are no formalities to be entertained before the debate is resumed.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER:

I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this Sitting be now suspended until 10:00 a.m. tomorrow was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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