

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed.

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL:

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for presenting to us this Appropriation Bill because, as a result of this, we are able to realise that there has been some growth in the economy.

It is quite obvious to me that the Barbados economy has been well managed over the last 10 years, more particularly during the last three years when many economies worldwide were in difficulties. I remember very well that early in 2001, seven months before what occurred on September 11th 2001, that the biggest economy in the world, the United States of America, as well as the Canadian economy, was in decline.

Many of the bigger countries within South and Central America were also in real chaos, but a very small country like Barbados, having been well managed, has been able to do much better than many of those big countries which have a lot more to offer in terms of agricultural development, manufacturing and so forth. Due to the fact that we have been able to manage our economy very well, we have been able to withstand what had occurred during the last three years.

House 25 Sequence 102

10:00 a.m.

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Continuation of His Honour J. M. EDGHILL:

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that we are living in some rather difficult times and it is now more important for us to think in terms of controlling or managing our economy. Sir, having had a modest recovery rate of about 2.5 per cent, I think we are now on the way to having a recovery rate of 3 per cent yearly from the next financial year.

I would now like to turn my attention to housing, which obviously affects my constituency. Sir, to some extent, I view the lack of housing and land as the most serious problems confronting Barbadians over the last 30 years. I must confess that over the past eight or nine years, this Government has done very well with housing. We have done better than any administration in the last 30 years but we must also recognise that the times are changing. We have more people working nowadays. We have more ambitious young people than 30 or 40 years ago, and from the time that these persons begin to work, they would like to be able to own their homes.

Although we have done reasonably well over the years, I think it is still necessary for us to concentrate more on the group of persons who work for less than \$3 000 per month because as far as I can estimate, about 90 per cent of Barbadians work for less than \$3 000 per month. Sir, I have a problem with Government taking Government land and building houses which cost between \$260 000, \$280 000 and \$300 000. That is obviously way beyond what these persons who earn less than \$3 000 a month can afford.

Sir, I understand that in the area of Kent there are approximately 60 or 80 acres of land and, therefore, I am appealing to this Government and to the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, that instead of giving this land to contractors to build houses in that price range, I think it would be better if Government thinks in terms of giving the land to the people. In my opinion, that acreage of land could provide for about 480 to 500 housing options for poor Barbadians. I think that this should be a priority of this Government.

Sir, I do not believe in giving Government's land to contractors for them to build houses because I think that Government is being exploited by contractors who are charging perspective house owners too much. I feel that if Government is not selling off all the land and decides to build houses, it should think in terms of building houses approximately 500, 600 and 800 square feet, which I am quite sure, Government should be able to build at no more than \$100 per square foot, in other words, thereby giving people in the lower incomes bracket, a chance to own their own houses.

Mr. Speaker, if Government does this, these persons would be able to expand on their homes, as has occurred in the Wanstead area some 35 years ago. I do not believe that Government should think in terms of flirting away 60 acres of land in Kent, Christ Church, when there are many people throughout Christ Church.

Some of you Honourable Members might not realise that in Christ Church South or in Christ Church West, there is no land to build houses and if there is land in the Christ Church West Central or Christ Church East Central, that land should be used for housing purposes for all the people in the constituencies of Christ Church.

Mr. Speaker, I estimate that there are approximately 1 000 persons in Christ Church who need to get land or houses. I think that we have some opportunities now to do this which would redound to the benefit of these poor people. I know that in the Coverley, Christ Church area, there is going to be some land. I also understand that the National Housing Corporation is thinking about putting houses valued between \$200 000 and \$240 000 on this land. I do not think this is a good idea and, therefore, that decision should be reversed.

Sir, I am hoping that commonsense will prevail and that the decision made by the National Housing Corporation could be reversed to the benefit of those persons who work for less than \$3 000 per month, who, as I said, are about 90 per cent of Barbadians.

Sir, I am not against middle-class or upper middle-class persons getting houses but I feel that with the liquidity in the banking system, those persons are able to access mortgages and would be able to do so at a faster and easier rate because the banks have a lot of money. Therefore, at this stage, I do not think we should be looking at those persons in the middle-class and upper middle-class, although yesterday I heard that the aim is to sell them these houses so that the National Housing Corporation could make money on those sales. Sir, I feel if Government sells 270 houses and makes about \$300 000 on each, that is approximately \$3 million, which cannot create 100 housing options.

Another area of concern is that pertaining to the housing units in Silver Hill and Gall Hill. First of all, I would like to commend this Ministry for selling these units and giving the tenants a chance to buy them at very reasonable rates. These persons have been living in these units for a long time, have paid quite large sums in rent and, therefore, I think it is a good decision taken by the National Housing Corporation to offer these persons these units for sale.

Sir, my personal difficulty stems for the fact that as I understand the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment are selling these houses at about 75 per cent of their value. They would then deduct approximately 40 per cent of the rent already paid. My belief is that if the units are going to be valued at today's price, the rent should be taken away on the basis of today's rent.

Asides.

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL:

I am not talking about the 30 or 40 per cent. In other words, I was in Gall Hill last night very late and I was made to understand that in 1964, these persons were paying approximately \$4 per week. It then rose to \$6, then to \$10. Therefore, I believe that if Government is using today's prices, it should take into consideration the rent paid at today's rate, which is \$30 and \$35 per week, as a means of cutting the price of the houses.

H:No. 25 (103)1010 a.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of His Honour J.M. EDGHILL:

The persons who are going to benefit especially in the old housing units, are the elderly people. Sir, most persons who rented these houses are now in their sixties and most of them are not in a position to get a big mortgage and whatever loan they receive they will have to pay back in a short space of time. We have to think in case of safeguarding these elderly people because some of them would like to own these houses and they should be given the chance to do so.

Sir, I also feel that people who owe rent and their houses will be sold to them this year, that they

should not be evicted.

Mr. Speaker, a friend of mine is planning to buy one of these units. She has \$3 000 in cash and plans to keep it for the purchase of the house. She owes National Housing Corporation \$2 500 but she feels it is better to keep the \$3 000 so that she can be sure she is able to buy the unit. Sir, I understand the thinking of this young lady.

Sir, many persons do not have any savings but yet they want to purchase their houses because, like everyone else, they want to own a piece of the rock. Sir, we have to look at these things to ensure that the people of the lower strata of the society are able to buy a house.

When we look at the world situation, the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider. Sir, the gap between the 12 poorest countries and the 12 most developed nations of this world has increased by 20-fold in the last 14 years. We can see the negative impact that globalisation would have on all countries.

We in Barbados should be thinking in terms of what we can do to help the people of the lower strata of the society so that the impact would not be as great on Barbadians as it would have been on other countries, especially Third World countries around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I would like at this stage to look at a report on community needs in the Silver Hill and surrounding areas which was submitted by Andrew Pollard a few years ago. This survey was conducted to investigate the need for community facilities and programmes in the area, to provide demographic and social data on the rental of the areas, to provide data on human resource needs and to provide data to meet the planning needs of the community.

When this survey was done, it was recognised that unemployment in Silver Hill was way above the national average. It was also realised that 80 per cent of the persons not working were unskilled and were interested in doing things like masonry, carpentry and art. Sir, over 43 per cent of these people wanted to acquire computer skills.

Mr. Speaker, there is a building owned by the National Housing Corporation in Silver Hill. Also, there was an advertisement in the newspapers where they were planning to sell this building but, Sir, only karaoke goes on in this building presently. It is a large building and in the light of this survey, it could be used for the benefit of the people of Silver Hill who feel they have no recreational facilities.

Sir, the Minister of Social Transformation wrote a letter to the Minister of Housing and Lands telling the Minister of my grievances and I look forward to this building not being sold and that it could be given to the Ministry of Social Transformation because I have things that could be done in this building.

I know the building is large at the top and the residents of the area feel that the top of the building could become a community centre where they could use it as a meeting place for discussion. I would also be able to bring the many returning nationals to lecture to these poor neighbourhoods to uplift them and make them feel that they are important like anyone else.

Sir, it is my intention that this building should be put into productive use for that community. I told

the Ministry of Social Transformation that 43 per cent of the people would like to get on the cutting edge of technology and that at least 25 to 30 computers should be installed in the bottom of this building as it is over 2 000 square feet, and the necessary computers could be put in place to benefit the residents of Silver Hill so that they can become computer literate.

Sir, a lot of these people cannot afford to buy computers and this is a chance for these people to be able to broaden their horizons.

H25/10:

20Sequence 104

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Continuation of His Honour J.M. Edghill:

I am also looking at putting some toilet facilities and some small changing rooms for males and females because there is a hard court immediately east of this area where the young play ladies basketball and netball and there are no changing facilities. If they want to use the bathroom, they have to go to someone's home in the neighbourhood to use their facilities.

Sir, over the years the youth from the Silver Hill area have played competitive basketball and it is very important that some sort of changing facility should be made available to them. Sir, when you are participating in games, there is need for warm-up exercises and the necessary for changing facilities to be available for their use.

I hope that the Ministry of Housing would understand the needs of the people in Silver Hill and the surrounding areas. I do not doubt the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East regarding the construction of a recreational facility because he has been talking to me about it and he seems very enthusiastic about this facility. Sir, I hope that by April 2005 there would be some movement to ensure that these people benefit.

Mr. Speaker, there is also some need for natural gas in the Silver Hill and Gall Hill districts. Approximately five years ago an attempt was made to bring natural gas in the Gall Hill and Silver Hill areas but because of certain problems this could not be done. I would have thought that when the natural gas project resumed a year ago, the areas of Silver Hill and Gall Hill would have been the first areas to be provided with natural gas since these areas work had started in these areas before.

However, I am glad that I have my good friend on my right, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, who I asked to help me because he understands my position very well.

Asides.

His Honour J.M. EDGHILL:

Sir, the Government has done very well in terms of managing the economy over the last 10 years. A lot of work has been put into getting the Barbados economy back on track and I am sure that from next year when this economy is able to have a growth rate of 3 per cent, we will be back on a course of

sustainable development, thereby giving Barbadians the chance to benefit from what has been translated as a result of the growth of the economy.

Once again I would like to thank you very much Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to making a further contributions.

I thank you.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate on the Estimates. Let me say up-front that I support the Estimates and I want to praise this Government for the manner in which they have presided over the affairs of this country since taking the reign of power in 1994 and continue to work in a manner that is satisfactory to the people of Barbados.

Sir, because you are a member of an organisation, it does not mean that you have to be in agreement with everything that is being done in that organisation. At times when you have to be critical of the organisation or persons in that organisation, you are labelled as anti that organisation or person. Yesterday I was privileged to listen to comments made in this Honourable House by Honourable Members from both sides.

It was very unfortunate that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East made such a contribution. Sometimes I get frustrated and say things e.g when your back is against the wall or you are pushed. However, the Honourable Member said how he felt at the time of his contribution and he expressed himself the way he did.

Sir, at the same time, the Minister responsible for Housing, the Honourable Member for St. James South, had to defend herself. She is a new Minister in housing and there are problems in housing of which I am also very upset. I cannot hold anything against the Minister because I sat on the Front Bench at one time and people on the Back Bench criticised my Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, there is a forum for those things to be vented. If that forum gives an opportunity for Honourable Members on the Government's side to express their frustrations, only then would we not have a repeat of what happened on the Floor yesterday by Honourable Members from the same side. Sir, those in authority must make sure that the forum gives members an opportunity to meet on a regular basis so that we can vent our frustrations.

Mr. Speaker, it is sad that it happened yesterday but the Minister had all right to defend herself. I will repeat, that forum has to offer Honourable Members the opportunity to vent their frustrations. I do not want to say anything else on that matter. Sir, I may be labelled but I speak my mind.

Mr. Speaker, I am not out there looking for anything from anyone. I am 50-odd years old and I worked hard in this country before I came to politics and I kept working hard in politics and I will always work in this country because no one can stop me from working.

H25:

10.30 a.m. Sequence 105

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I support the Estimates and I support the Barbados Labour Party. It is the only Party that I am a member of and will ever be a member of.

Mr. Speaker, this country has done well under the leadership of the Right Honourable Prime Minister and his Cabinet and at this time, I want to praise the Minister of Tourism and International Transport for the excellent job he has been doing where our number one foreign exchange earner is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, we had an invasion in Barbados yesterday which was not done by outside forces, but by outside people. Seven tourist ships were in Barbados' water yesterday with over 12 000 tourists. Again, I want to compliment the Minister of Tourism and International Transport, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, my constituent - I do not know if he voted for me - for doing such a fantastic job as he is in charge of bringing all of these tourists to Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with this Government. The people of St. Michael West-Central sent me here to represent their interest and for the little time I have in here I will make sure I represent them to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeking some \$2 billion to support the Estimates for the year 2004-2005 and I am here today asking that some of this money trickle down to the benefit of the people of St. Michael West Central. The people of Long Gap in Spooners Hill; Clarke's Gap; Woodstock Road; Allamby Gap; Derriston Road; Pillersdorf; Grazettes; Fairfield Road; St. Stephen's; Cleavedale; Upper and Lower Wavell Avenue; Eckstein Village; Kellman Land; Oxley Road; Alleyne's Land and the part of Grazettes Housing Area that just came over to me for representation are entitled to get something, and I want something to trickle down to all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I represented St. Michael West Central for two terms, so those people have been accustomed to good representation from 1994 until now. The part that came over from the constituency of St. Michael North to join with St. Michael West Central had good representation also. When I went there to first canvass the area, they told me that they know that I will give them the same good representation as the Honourable Member whose jurisdiction they were under was giving them. Mr. Speaker, that I will continue to do.

I am going to work with them but I need tools. When I talk about tools, Mr. Speaker, I do not mean a hammer and a saw, I mean some of the goodies from the Urban Development Commission, the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment and the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to know that part of this \$2 billion is going to trickle down to the people of St. Michael West Central, that is what I was sent here to do. The same thing the people of St. Michael Central sent you here to do and you have done, I want to be able to do the same, Mr. Speaker.

Now, they talk about not running again. Mr. Speaker, I made a statement already and I do not repeat my statements. I know that if the people of St. Michael West Central say that they are going ask such and such a person to go to Cabinet to represent them, they are going to vote for that person. If they bring somebody else and the people say they do not want that person and they want to push somebody upon them, they will meet the wrath of me. It is as simple as that because I am going to fight them. I went to nomination, the people of St. Michael West Central nominated me. I contested a seat to come to Parliament and I represent the people so whoever they say is the man or the woman that they want to represent them and anybody, I do not care who it is, plays with it, they will be playing with me. I hope it is a woman, so that she can play with me.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Ministry of Social Transformation under the leadership of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East for the amount of service they have given to the people of St. Michael West Central. We have been able through the Urban Development Commission under the Ministry of Social Transformation to get many houses repaired for the elderly and the disadvantaged over the years. Through the same Ministry of Social Transformation we have been able to get some new road programmes and new lights. They were also looking at the private tenancies where this Government has put in place a facility that persons living in private tenancies can purchase those lots if the landlord is willing to sell. Under that programme we have about 13 or 14 of those private tenancies. I know that at this present moment the Ministry of Social Transformation through the Urban Development Commission under the programme where the Government of Barbados pays a portion of that money towards that purchase of lots, are looking at four or five of them so that they can be conveyed to those persons.

I am hoping that this good Government, through the Minister responsible for the Urban Development Commission, will continue to make sure these things redound not only to the people of St. Michael West-Central but to the people of St. Michael Central as well.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Thank you!

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I originated from St. Michael Central and I have seen the amount of work that has been done in St. Michael Central in areas like Military Road, Industry Road, Station Hill and Waterhall Land. I do not know if other Members of Parliament know the area, but I know the area very well. Mr. Speaker, as we are not in a position to demand things because we are not in the seat of making those decisions, we can only hope that it will be able to continue in the way that it has been going.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of houses in the constituency of St. Michael West Central that the owners can benefit from the Urban Development Commission programme.

House 25 Sequence 10610:

40 a.m.

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Continuation of Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

The owners can benefit from the Urban Development Commission's programme and the Minister has promised me that I too will get my share. I do not expect that all of mine would be repaired at once or that they are going to repair 30 for me and none for the other Honourable Members. I expect that fairness and equity would prevail. The names have been submitted to the Urban Development Commission and the people of St. Michael West Central are depending on me. Therefore, I could only hope that the Honourable Minister would make sure that the Urban Development Commission's programme that is extended to the people of Barbados would also continue to the good people of St. Michael West Central.

Mr. Speaker, I do not see the Honourable Minister in her seat but I would like to ask a question with regard to the National Housing Corporation. Sir, over the number of years, the National Housing Corporation has gotten a number of challenges and is, therefore, plagued with problems.

The first two questions I would like to have answered are: Who is in charge at the National Housing Corporation? Who is the General Manager of the National Housing Corporation? Sir, if there is an organisation, there must be a manager to manage the affairs so that the general public could have a proper service extended to them.

I believe that if a general manager is in charge of an organisation, I should not know that the General Manager is still at work, receiving taxpayers' money, and then one is to hear about an acting General Manager. There cannot be a General Manager and an Acting General Manager simultaneously. It would have to be a general manager and an assistant manager.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. It is impossible to have a general manager in position and an acting general manager at the same time.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Speaker, I want to know who is the General Manager of the National Housing Corporation, so that if I were to write a letter on behalf of my constituents, I would know to whom I must address it. Sir, there is too much confusion over there. Sir, there are some very good workers over there but then there are others who believe that they could treat people badly. Sir, it cannot continue.

Mr. Speaker, parts of St. Michael North, the Grazettes area, has come over to me and those people have problems. Whenever I canvass that area, people do complain and, therefore, I would want to know to whom I can speak, to be able to have these problems corrected. People have been renting these units for years and cannot get windows, pipes, houses or roofs repaired. These are problems of those persons living in Ulster Road, Denton Road, Anton Close, Breton Close, Kildaire Close, Weston Terrace, Pembroke Pine. These people have paid their rents and their units should be serviced.

Mr. Speaker, I know there is a workshop in the area and these people have complained that they have

gone there and have made complaints and, for over a year, nobody has come to look at the problem but when, in fact, somebody does come to inspect the problem, the tenants hear nothing from these persons for another year.

Mr. Speaker, if good management was in place at the National Housing Corporation, it would have been able to put things in place to properly manage those sections, to make sure that people get the service to which they are entitled.

Mr. Speaker, that area has come over to me and I am going to give it as much attention as I have been giving to the people in the other parts of St. Michael West Central. I want to know from the Honourable Member what obtains there. It is time that we wake up and give the people proper service. Sir, I intend that if the people do not get the proper service they deserve, I am going to walk the length and breadth with them to the National Housing Corporation because I have to represent them. I am not going to sit back, complain and gripe. I am going to take them by the bus loads to the National Housing Corporation because they have to get what they want. It is disgusting.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that Government has acquired land in the old Grazettes warehouse area. When the land was acquired, it was felt that there would have been approximately 80 housing lots. I now understand that there would have been only 40 lots available for the people of Barbados. At that time I was told that being the representative for St. Michael West Central, the people of that constituency would have gotten access to 80 per cent of the lots, with the other 20 per cent being there to service other clients.

Mr. Speaker, I have had many complaints from persons who have gone to the National Housing Corporation and cannot get any answers with regard to these lots at Grazettes. These persons have already gone there and have already chosen their lots but cannot hear anything more as to when they would be able to acquire the lots. After some time now, they are hearing that amenities and infrastructure have to be put in before these lots could be handed over to them.

Mr. Speaker, we heard that some people were offered lots under the Sites and Services Programme and that others would have been able to get houses built by the National Housing Corporation. Sir, to date nothing has happened. Over on the other side of the road, the National Housing Corporation has built two duplexes. I know that they had contravened the building law and that one of those duplexes had to be remodelled.

Sir, I remember sitting in a Cabinet years ago and hearing about this unit. I was in a meeting in the presence of the two General Managers when it was to be done but to date nothing has been done about it. These are two units built there, which were used to accommodate persons whose houses were blown down during the last storm, but now I see persons living there with their cars having "G" registration number plates.

H:No. 25 (107)1050 a.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation Mr. R.D. MARSHALL:

Sir, your car can be registered in St. George but you live in St. Michael. Mr. Speaker, I want answers because I have told the people from the constituency of St. Michael West Central that they are entitled to a percentage of units in the area and they are interested in buying one of them but, to date, I cannot find out anything about houses or units from the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot frustrate people's lives because the first thing a person needs after leaving school is a job, then a house in which to place their family and we should get serious about housing in this country.

I understand that the land in Marshall/Parson Gap has been turned over to the Urban Development Commission for housing but, to date, I cannot get anyone to tell me what is going on. I am the representative of that area yet no one speaks to me about these matters. Sir, I do not have a forum in which to vent these issues so I must vent them in this House.

Mr. Speaker, an old building in my constituency was renovated, people from the constituency of St. Michael East live in it but no one told me about it. Sir, a malicious person told the Prime Minister that I said no one else should live in that house but the people from my constituency. Mr. Speaker, it is not true, but people will try to malign you to give you a bad name as you seek to represent the people of your constituency.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I support the Urban Development Commission. The Minister has been very good to my constituency but these little matters are important when you have a constituency to represent. Sir, they are unmannerly people because no one had the decency to say anything to the Member of Parliament who represents that constituency. I was the Minister at the time and when you go to the powers that be, they consider it a joke.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to give the people of St. Michael West Central the best representation for the few months that I have left. I support these Estimates and I hope that some of the \$2 billion would go down to Spooners Hill, Black Rock, St. Stephens, Grazettes, Clevedale, Fairfield area and that the people of St. Michael West Central will be happy. Mr. Speaker, before it gets there, I want them to make sure that some of it is dropped off in St. Michael Central so that you, too, Sir, can benefit and represent your people.

Mr. Speaker, we came together and we will stick together. I thank you, Sir.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, I was ambivalent about whether to participate in this debate this year for a number of reasons. The first is that Honourable Members on the Other Side know that I am not part of the "How-great-thou-art" choir and that my patience for sitting down and listening to a stream of encomiums showered on the Minister of Finance and on colleague Ministers as if it is a mutual admiration society is tedious.

This Government did not come to office in 2004, but has been in office for 10 years in three different incarnations. Sir, it is not my fault that the wrong people are on the Front Bench. If there is one good

thing about the Barbados Labour Party, it is that at times you find yourself as useless as a wet tissue. I can think of Members who have got to that stage but, as soon as you die, the praise that is heaped upon you leaves me to wonder why those persons who are so brilliant, outstanding, successful, honourable and so on are not being drafted into the national effort in Barbados today.

Sir, not only on the Opposition Side but on the Other Side we have heard noises during the debate about the sad performance of Government. This morning a word like “decency” was used. Yesterday I heard a word like “deceit” which years ago would have been ruled unparliamentary but it is part of the records of this House now that a Member of Parliament has been described as full of deceit.

I heard the words “frustration” and “playing with people’s lives”. This is an honest but truthful statement and it not different to what I said in the last debate. I also heard the word “unmannerly” and these words have characterised what I would consider to be the truth. There is always a kernel of truth, Sir,....

Mr. SPEAKER:

Honourable Member, it was very unfortunate that these terms were used yesterday and were allowed into the records of this House. I can assure you that this Chair will not allow such terms to be used while I am seated here. They are unparliamentary. You know they are unparliamentary and this is not the level we have sunk to and it will not be allowed in here again.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, your point is well taken. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I was ambivalent because Honourable Members on the Other Side were doing such a good job of exposing some of the critical feelings of Barbadians. They may have used unparliamentary language but it is the street language. It is what is being said on the streets of Barbados about this Government. It is not being said by me, Sir.

I will not repeat it in here nor would I expect any Member to repeat it if you are in the Chair but it would never take away from the fact that those exact words, those epithets and characterizations are exactly what the people of Barbados are using every day in this country.

Sir, there is also an element of frustration. Last week on my way back to the office, I met some young professionals like accountants and bankers, and they were amazed that this Government believes it can continue to just use words. Every year, since 1997, it has been a watershed year in Barbados. At every Estimates debate the Honourable Member for St. Peter said it was either a year of departure, a seminal and historic occasion or a watershed and we have heard it again on Monday. Sir, I have grown tired of these things.

We heard about these important decisions, not that they have been taken but that will have to be taken to saying that it is just a question of repositioning Barbados but, Sir, when will this happen? These Estimates have not reflected when it will happen. I must confess that I have not read the Estimates and I will get to the reason why because no one is wasting my time anymore.

H25/11:00

Sequence 108

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Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

The Honourable Member for The City of Bridgetown said that we have become victims of our own success but this Government has become a victim of its own propaganda, a victim of its own spin, a victim of its own language. These guys believe it and this is the embarrassing and hurtful thing about participating in anything in this House of Assembly nowadays.

Sir, everything is innovative and first. I do not normally criticise the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East but I have only raised it because two days ago on the radio he embarrassed one of his constituents and did not know it.

The Honourable Member said that there was going to be a Children's Summit in Barbados and he said that it would be the first time. The Honourable Member is not Minister of Social Transformation. I was once a Minister of Community Development and Culture. We had a United Nations-sponsored Children's Summit here in Barbados in which the children spoke. Do you know what is remarkable? The most outstanding speaker was the daughter of two Rastafarians and one who died, originating in Black Rock, and she is a constituent of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East. She lives in The Pine. She was adjudged the most outstanding delegate.

Sir, the Executive Director of UNICEF was dispatched to Barbados. The Joint Chairman of the Conference was the then Governor-General and former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Dame Nita Barrow. We have gone past this. We do not have to embarrass our citizens by making them think that every so-called innovation that these Ministers come up with, or that somebody tells them that it is an innovation, is necessarily an innovation. That is why we sell ourselves short...

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

On a point of order. Sir, this is the first time in the history of this Parliament that I ever got up on a point of order. I believe that Honourable Member for St. John has set up his speech to lure me into a response.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John is referring to a United Nations Conference that was held. This Conference that I was speaking about was a Children's Conference on AIDS. What the Honourable Member is speaking about had nothing to do with AIDS.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, that is also irrelevant. That Conference covered issues, including AIDS. It may not have been on AIDS alone, but what you said in the interview was not that. You said that it is the first time that the children would be delegates and would be speaking. That is also incorrect.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

On a point of clarification. I would like the Honourable Member for St. John to tell me what year it

was that the Children's Conference was held in Barbados, which would determine if AIDS was part of the discussion.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I already said that I was Minister. AIDS started when I left the university. I was not a Minister when I left university. You have to calculate when it was. I am not doing anybody's homework.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Call UNICEF or check the records of the Ministry. The files have not been burnt. The information is there. There were five topics and the young people spoke. The Conference was convened at the Frank Collymore Hall in a United Nations style setting as a follow-up to the Children's Summit held, in which the world leaders came and signed the United Nations Declaration on The Rights of the Child. That is what it was about and AIDS is in the United Nations Declaration on The Rights of the Child.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

On a point of clarification and elucidation on this matter. I want to say that as far as the AIDS discussion and conferences that were held in the Caribbean, Sir, two years ago the first World Conference on AIDS was held in South Africa. The Caribbean, for 62 years, is holding the first World Conference on AIDS. Never was there a conference for children on AIDS being held. The Honourable Member might be misleading this Honourable House.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Let us not prolong this. The Honourable Member said that AIDS was one of the topics that was discussed.

Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

I am just asking the Honourable Member for St. John to clarify it. To prove that AIDS was the discussion, I can get the information from UNICEF.

Mr. SPEAKER:

I do not believe that is a matter that we prove at this point. I think we should move one. The Honourable Member has stated that AIDS was a topic at that Conference and I think that the House accepts the truthfulness of the Honourable Member. Let us move on, please. Do not let us get bogged down with that.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I am not going to delay my speech arguing that. It was not a first. It is not innovative and it is a discredit to the young lady in St Michael South East who spoke outstandingly and was adjudged the best delegate at that Conference in the early 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, there is another part of the exercise that we go through in this debate every year and that is the exercise of blaming the Democratic Labour Party for signing off on the World Trade Organisation

Uruguay Round and its implication in 1994. Sir, that is a facile argument. It is a nonsensical and silly argument to abduce anyway.

The Government of Haiti just changed. They did not like what CARICOM did and they said that they are finished with CARICOM. The Government of Spain just changed. They had troops in Iraq and they said that they do not want them there and that they are bringing them home by June. The only Government in the entire Caribbean that seems to be gagged, tied and bound by the decisions of a previous Government is this Government.

Sir, they could kick out the International Monetary Fund, rewrite the Inter-American Development Bank loan and do all kinds of things, but the one thing, apparently, they could not do is to either renegotiate, discuss, change, delay or take any steps to save Barbados, even though they are arguing that the Government and defence are sovereignty. They could not save us from what they considered to be a heinous act by the Democratic Labour Party in signing off in 1994 under the negotiation.

There are Members of the current Cabinet of the Barbados Government who knew about it and they did not talk about it then. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East was part of the private sector team that used to meet with Government and we put the programme on the table before them.

The current Minister of Agriculture in Barbados was the principal advisor to the Minister of Finance after the Director of Finance and Economic Affairs, and he is a Minister. Ask him if you have problems with anything. You do not have to wait until you come into this Honourable House. You can do this in Cabinet. Ask the former Permanent Secretary of Finance and see what he remembers.

Sir, they cannot blame the Democratic Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, what is now the mantra in all of the pretty language, tell me which economy in the Caribbean collapsed after September 11th? We are acting as though we are the only territory.

I have attended three Budget speeches in different territories since September 11th and every Minister of Finance and Prime Minister said that they have weathered September 11th better than they thought they would have weathered it, but in Barbados we are to support it. It is becoming a cacophony. It is not even soothing to the ears. Sir, we hear the nonsense constantly that we have survived September 11th and have done better than we thought we would have done.

Sir, as the British would say, bully to you. If we have done well that is very good but doubt that there are other countries in the Caribbean that have surpassed us and have also done well and since September 11th they were able to liberalise their telecommunication sector. They were able to get tourists to come to their country, were able to build new sporting facilities, stadium, cricket grounds and do all kinds of things in this Caribbean.

H25:

11.10Sequence 109

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

We are so arrogant that we believe we are the only ones who have achieved anything because we have a unique level of leadership and a brilliance that is so uncharacteristic in the rest of the world that we should perhaps be in charge of the entire Caribbean region.

Look at the Estimates, Sir, if you want to, but I am not wasting my time with it because these Estimates bear no reality to Government's programme and the Estimates over the last 10 years bear no reality to what the Government actually does in this country in a given fiscal year.

A mockery is made of Parliament because a substantial amount of capital works is undertaken off-budget through private companies which are never discussed in here beforehand. A mockery is made of Parliament because, despite what the Minister says, they seldom are able to implement any of the projects they say they are going to implement in a given fiscal year.

When his Excellency Sir Clifford Husbands was delivering the Throne Speech when the Government announced in about three parts of the Throne Speech that they are going to finish the St. John Polyclinic, everybody looked at me and giggled, ha, ha, ha. When he announced as well that they are going to build a community technology centre at Gall Hill, St. John, everybody was giggling and looking at me. When he said too that the Government would finish the tenantry roads, particularly in St. John, everybody was looking at me and laughing.

Sir, not one of those projects have been undertaken since this Government has come to office and I could go down the list. Far from being rebuilt, the St. John's Polyclinic does not have a dentist chair. The St. John Parish Church congregation was recently asked to put up money to buy a chair that diabetics sit on so that they can cut their toenails and so on because the one that was in the St. John's Polyclinic had broken down.

The Minister, before he was elected to this Chamber, went up there himself and looked at it and promised relief to the workers, but nothing has happened, so I am not surprised at the level of frustration, the words that are used or the criticisms that come from the Back Bench, they are completely justified.

Mr. Speaker, not a single tenantry road is being done now by the Rural Development Commission in St. John. I was promised that when they finish Sargeants Street they would go to Rose Gate and College Savannah. We went up there and walked around for about the fifth time in my life, did tape measure, red paint and all kinds of ignorance, 20 officials writing down things perhaps getting a day off from the office. That nonsense has been going on for too long.

You walk around, the residents come out and ask if they are getting the road and they said they are trying their best. Two years later not a single road is being built by the Rural Development Commission in St. John. Transport to rural areas is a total disgrace in relation to the parish of St. John and other parts of Barbados. Water - if you do not get home by 7:00 p.m. in Gall Hill, St. John you would not get any water. If you cannot get home to cook for your children or to bathe, brother man, you got to stay stink.

When the young men come off Gall Hill pasture playing football or night cricket, they better find a

young lady to go and bathe at somewhere else in Barbados because they cannot get a bath in St. John.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

I will credit the Honourable Member for St. George North with an improved level of delivery by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport in St. John, particularly the main road. That Newcastle Road was down since October 1994. It is only now that I am seeing action on it. This Government, and it would not be out of wickedness I hope, paved a road from District "C" Police Station in St. Philip right to the boundary of St. Philip North and stop.

That road from Massiah Street to St. John's Parish Church is very bad. You have children walking to the Lodge School and you have parents driving there every morning licking out the shocks of their cars. This has been going on for the longest time and every year in the Estimates they make provisions for doing that road because funds were provided since 1993 under a World Bank Project but that road has not been done yet. They are now working on it.

I only learnt on Monday that the Community Technology Programme had been stopped. They moved all the chairs, the tables and everybody out of the community centre. They beg me for room to assist with this and that. They want to know if I could accommodate the Church, could I lend them chairs and all kinds of things. The next thing you know the Community Centre is empty, nothing else has happened and they say to come back because we are not ready yet. The project came to an end, but that has been in the Estimates for two years.

In response to my criticism, we were promised hotels in St. John and all kinds of new developments at Bath and Consett Bay, but all that has been is talk. I want them to identify for me where the land for housing and for the landless are taking place in my constituency.

Sports facilities were promised at Four Roads and at Massiah Street but I got nothing. At Gall Hill, St. John we have on one pasture a premier league football team, two 2nd Division teams, an Under 13 team, an Under 15 team, a Division 2 BCA team, a premier league BCL team, the St. John Football League competition at night and night cricket competition.

All of these teams compete in a given year for one playing field in St. John, but you do not hear about any incidents. These are young men who come out and enjoy themselves and feel good about themselves even though they cannot get a bath when they done because the water is off in Gall Hill.

Sir, you cannot even get them to extend the pavilion. Sir, that is why I tell you that this document is a waste of time and I am not wasting my time reading it. If you want some paper to wrap some fish with, or you know somebody who is painting a house that want paper, let them come for my Estimates because they would be put to better use than to come in here debating every year and then nothing happens.

Ministers walk around with their chests in the air trying to fool people that they are undertaking and implementing projects in Barbados for the benefit of the people of this country but at the national level, not regionally, the Government's credibility is declining.

Mr. Speaker, we had a big debate in this country about a fishing dispute. As I said, the only way you get credit around here is when you have passed on and then they say how great you were, that you were a man of integrity and outstanding ability and so on. We have three tripartisan leaders now. They could send Sir Erskine Sandiford, Sir Richard Haynes and Sir Henry Forde to restore the pride and credit of this country internationally.

If the CARICOM Heads do not want to speak to each other, that does not surprise me because the Back Bench and the Front Bench do not speak in this Parliament. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central just told this House that he has no place at which he can go to discuss any issue that affects his constituency. There is no forum, that is what the Back Bench is saying, so that filters up through the system and then we hear the Government telling people...

Aside.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown had the temerity in the debate last year to say that the one important thing about this Government is the level of consultation. She said we go out to the people, we hold town hall meetings and listed a whole set of things but internally they are not talking, and then they want to fool the people that they can implement something in this country.

That is the kind of scenario that leads to the level of frustrations where the energy levels of Honourable Members are declining and diminishing and their interest in politics is being denuded by this negativity, by this fooling with peoples' minds, by the smokescreens, the spin and the propaganda.

Mr. Speaker, every time I pass through the Airport, and I would admit that is regularly, the maids at the Airport are totally lost as to what would happen to them. Some of them are middle-aged women and some of them are young women. This is a Government that says it cares, but nobody has been able to explain to them whether they will be able to finish paying off their mortgage tomorrow or whether they have any job security at all because there is a new ethos, private sector partnerships that will take over and make the place spanking clean.

The same Bajans have to use the Airport. They not only clean it. They travel too. They have pride in their country but they are not good enough. The new private sector partnership arrangement displaces them after their contribution to our national development at an airport that people said was the best in the Caribbean. It has had problems, that is true, but that is the thanks they get from the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport for the contribution they have made to the national development of this country.

Supersession in the public service. This Government comes in here every year -

House 25 Sequence 11011:

20 a.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

Mr. Speaker, look at the mantra, Public Sector Reform, human resource revolution, capacity building, telecommunication revolution, as were the highlight of one Estimates. Sir, every year we hear it. The British would call it twaddle. It is a word that means just meaningless twaddle, just mantras, words thrown up in the air, that a year later means absolutely nothing.

Sir, look at the situation at the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment. Apparently there are two General Managers there. Honourable Members have no formula for the allocation of housing for the benefit of those persons in this country who need it and the National Housing Corporation is busy undertaking its commercial activities, something that we have consistently warned about since 1994.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the area of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. We were promised new legislation to deal with minimum wages, unfair dismissals, occupational health and safety. Sir, during the 10 years, none of it has come to Parliament. Sir, if I hear anything about Labour, you could close down the Ministry of Labour tomorrow and some of the others too. It would have no impact on the average worker in this country because there are seven men who are doing one job which was done by the late Sir Harold, 15 to 20 years ago.

In the Ministry of Health, we are hearing about laparoscopic surgery, and a diabetic cannot even get his or her toenails cut at the St. John Polyclinic. Some days they cannot even get water. These are basic things that one should have in this country but yet we hear this is the country that does laparoscopic surgery! Well, for those who need that, that is good but for the vast majority of my constituents, that word does not even cross their ears.

It is the basic things such as medication to help with their diabetes or hypertension, the ability for them to go to the hospital to get dressings or to get their toes cleaned, et cetera. If government cannot provide those basic services to people in this country with these chronic diseases, then why come and tell us about laparoscopic surgery? Do you think that you are impressing me? You are not because at the end of the day, I am not relating to the people who need that surgery on a daily basis. I am relating to disabled persons who can neither get nor afford prostheses.

Sir, I am grappling with a young man who for 15 years, has had to use one. When he came to my office some time ago, he showed me the number of weldings and repairs that had been done on that prosthesis. I said that I was going to check with the National Insurance Office for him. He said that some days his back is so painful that even for him to get up from the chair, was painful, but he is not going to get laparoscopic surgery. He is not on that list. He only wants the basic health care.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the deterioration of the roads and about the amount of money those private contractors in this country are being paid, where two years later, the whole surface comes off. Government must do something about that and must deal with those contractors because they are raping this economy when they get millions of dollars to do main roads, and then two years later, the roads look as though they were never done.

Mr. Speaker, every year before the Estimates we see a statement from the Barbados Water Authority

about innovations that are going to take place. Every year we hear from every statutory corporation. We see pictures from Ministers walking around, followed by the Press and front page stories such as: "A door gets wet in a building like the London Bourne Towers." Stories like that require an entourage. It requires the two Ministers knocking on the door and showing how the wood is coming off or how the paint is peeling, et cetera, and we are supposed to sit here and read through this nonsense!

Sir, I said once and I repeat that anybody who wants my Estimates this year can have them. I will give them away now and it will make absolutely no difference between now and next March. This financial charade we go through year after year has been exposed by This Side. I want to congratulate the Honourable Members on That Side who have had the courage of their convictions to actually get to the kernel of truth, to get to the core of the issue in Barbados.

Sir, if we continue raising people's expectations with these pretty speeches year after year - not that people are ever listening but if they ever start to listen - and they hold the Honourable Members on the Front Bench to these lofty promises and commitments and deal with them when they fail to deliver, God help us all. I hope that I am not there when the backlash comes.

Sir, every year I listen to the list of promises. It starts on the first day with the Honourable Minister of Finance. He is good with words, but not with implementation. He can say the same thing over five years, in five different ways, and one would think that is the first time they would be hearing it, but when one looks beneath it, one would see that it is the same thing he has been promising for the five years.

Sir, the telecommunications sector was an example of that. Barbados made a total mixed-match of it. We are now getting on the boat when other countries which do not even have the resource base that we have, such as the level of public service expertise, telecommunications engineers, small businessmen, ministers, as many civil servants, no budget, a private sector that is endowed like ours, have been on the boat four years ago and have been able to get their reforms going.

Sir, we in Barbados are in a situation where there is such a wide divergence and disconnection between what is said on the Front Bench and what is actually delivered in any year, that as I said, this debate becomes a totally meaningless exercise. It is one in which there is a lot of energy being put into an exercise that the public is not listening to anyway and that, at the end of the day, is going to turn out to be completely futile. Sir, I am extremely frustrated with it.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Speaker, this debate is obviously now winding down and I think that the last contribution clearly shows that Honourable Members' brains are now beginning to tire somewhat, therefore, I do not propose to be very long.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give my full support to the Estimates currently under discussion in this Honourable Chamber, in the Prime Minister's words, represent a balance between stabilisation and transformation and are part of the continuum of measures that have come over time to this Parliament since we have assumed office in 1994.

Mr. Speaker, there has always been a policy and a purpose underlying the introduction of any measures that were brought to this Honourable Chamber by this Government, whether it was to consolidate gains previously made to put the economy on a sustainable growth path; whether it was mixing the developmental approach with the need to provide social services; whether it was promoting savings which would lead to investment and generate jobs; or whether, as in the case now, we are seeking a balance between stabilisation and transformation. There is always a policy that guides the presentation of any measures brought to this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, in these Estimates we see a proper allocation of funds to all Ministries, to ensure that there is a mix between stabilisation and transformation. The Ministries are all properly funded, whether one looks at economic Ministries like, for example, the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport, the Ministry of Social Transformation or the Ministry of Education. We see proper allocation to ensure that we get this mix.

Mr. Speaker, all of the programmes being funded this year are designed to ensure that our country is a stable and prosperous one and that as individual citizens of this country, we all could enjoy a high standard of living with everyone on board and sharing as far as possible, in the country's success. Therefore, we would find no individual being left out in these Estimates today.

H:No. 25 (111)1130 a.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on the area of small business development because a few members made passing references to this area and, as usual, those on the Other Side are never complimentary about anything the Government does in relation to the small business sector. Sir, I will give an update as to what is happening in that arena at this time.

Mr. Speaker, no matter what you do or give to small business enterprises, the bottom line is money because they need to know that they have funding. In fact, they have identified the lack of funding as the biggest handicap to their development.

We have already established a number of funds to ensure that there is adequate funding for this sector but we have also gone beyond where we have responded to complaints made about how the funds were operating and put in place new systems and procedures to ensure that maximum benefit is now derived by persons intended to benefit from the establishment of these funds.

Sir, I want to give the success story of the three Funds.

We have set up Fund Access to facilitate development of micro enterprise in Barbados and have to date disbursed 435 loans to the value of \$6.5 million and has thereby created 482 jobs. The Urban Development Commission has disbursed 475 loans to a value of \$4.2 million and the Rural Development Commission has disbursed 572 loans to the value of \$4.7 million. When you do a total of

these three agencies, they have disbursed 1 482 loans to the value of \$15.4 million and have created approximately 1 500 new job opportunities for Barbadians in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Government can be proud of this. Honourable Members who speak in annoyance or anger about the imagined neglect of the small business sector would do well to check the facts before they speak because this is a success story for the Government.

Sir, complaints were received from the persons who were intended to benefit from these funds and because of those complaints, meetings were held and improvements have been made to ensure that these funds are even more effective in ensuring that small business people are the ones who benefit. Therefore, Government has further freed up the lending process of these agencies by requiring them to take some risks in their loan operations which are higher than those of the commercial banks and other traditional lending agencies.

Sir, I have always felt that there had to be some practice of high-risk lending in this country. I felt that over the year, commercial banks could have easily engaged in high risk lending. It would have only required the setting aside of a small percentage of net profit but commercial banks look at the bottom line and never responded to this particular need in the society and Government has responded by instructing these agencies that they must operate with this kind of mindset.

Sir, we recognise at Fund Access that with a loan limit of \$50 000, a maximum repayment period of five years at an interest rate of 11.5 per cent saw the results which I spoke about earlier, but we felt that the results could be better. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, from January 1, 2004, the maximum loan amount at Fund Access has doubled from \$50 000 to \$100 000 and the maximum repayment loan is 10 years as opposed to five years and the interest rate is only 6 per cent.

We have made the system better than it was before for small business persons. Sir, more ordinary Barbadians can now benefit from Government's lending agencies and its new policies.

Mr. Speaker, more importantly, the Enterprise Growth Fund which up until December only provided equity financing and venture capital has now been empowered also to provide loans starting from \$100 000. This is important because people are not attracted to equity financing because it requires giving up some measure of control to an outsider who will sit on your board of directors to tell you what you should do and small business people do not want that, but a loan.

Therefore, we have decided that this micro enterprise agency can now also provide loans. I want to see this policy spread to the Innovation Fund and the Small Business Venture Capital Incorporated which also deals with venture capital.

Mr. Speaker, the Small Business Venture Capital Incorporated was set up in 1996 with a grant of \$2 million from Government but, to date, there have only been 51 applications because there is no attraction to equity financing. In the same way we have freed up the system in relation to the Enterprise Growth Fund, we need to extend the approach to the Small Business Venture Capital Incorporated in order to fully utilise the grant of \$2m given by Government.

Mr. Speaker, we have uplifted small business people.

H25/11:40

Sequence 112

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

There was a time when we spoke about itinerant and wayside vending or some agricultural-type and artisan-type activity. This is not a pejorative statement, but those are the areas that our minds went to immediately.

Sir, we have now allowed people to indulge in a broader mix of economic and businesslike activity than before. Small business people are now allowed operation in desktop publishing, videography, karaoke services, small business consultants, computer programming, internet related services, personal care sector and massage parlours, health shops, spas, gift shops, tailoring, the music industry and catering services.

If we go through constituencies, we will see that there are several people who are engaged in the manicure business. These are the kinds of businesses that are on record as having benefitted in a way that this Government has ensured that funds are to be made available to assist the small business people in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we have had a huge success story in the area of small business development. I said that I was not going to be long but it would be remiss of me if I did not say something in the area of the Rural Development Commission, particularly as it relates to my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see in these Estimates that the sum allocated to the Urban Development Commission has been increased from \$11.4 million, the current financial year, to \$12.7 million for the next financial year. I am happy to see that there has been an increase in funds being allocated to the Urban Development Commission because I would like some of that funding to reach the constituency of St. Michael North. I want to see an equitable distribution of the resources of the Urban Development Commission. I am not asking for an equal division because I recognise that a Minister has out of necessity, to get more.

Asides.

Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN:

For example, if there are 20 jobs, I accept that a Minister should get about 10 for himself but the other 10 can be divided in an equitable manner.

Sir, I am not saying that work has not been done in St. Michael North. Work has been done in St. Michael North, but we have reached the stage where things have been at a standstill in relation to the

Urban Development Commission for too long.

Mr. Speaker, around the middle of last year I went to the Urban Development Commission asking for some help and I was repeatedly being told that they do not have any money. I do not know where the money went. I am merely repeating what I was told. They said that they had to wait for money and this was as far back as June/July last year when, apparently the Urban Development Commission had run out of money.

Sir, at least I know that if there was no money and it was not just a way to get rid of me - nobody is going to get rid of me that easily.

Asides.

Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN:

I know that come April 1 there is going to be \$12.7 available to the Urban Development Commission. I really want to say that there are roads in St. Michael North that need to be fixed, whether it is lodge Hill, Hinds Hill or other areas, and I want to see some work being started on them this coming financial year.

Mr. Speaker, there are houses to be repaired in St. Michael North. I have a case in my constituency, this may more appropriately fall under the Ministry of Social Transformation than Urban Development Commission per se, where a person has a pit toilet and a young child lives in the house. Several months ago the young child almost fell into the pit toilet.

Asides.

Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Speaker, this is not something that I feel proud to know that almost happened in my constituency.

There was a time when it was expressly promoted, and I share the view 100 per cent, that having to use a pit toilet is one of the worst forms of human degradation known to humanity. The commitment has been to eradicate this eyesore completely from Barbados.

Sir, there are stretches of houses in my constituency where there are still pit toilets and I want to see a serious approach to converting these pit toilets to water borne toilets. Certainly, a case where a young child could almost fall into a pit toilet and the matter was referred to the Ministry almost a year ago and no action has been taken, is something that I feel constrained to raise on the floor of Parliament.

I feel constrained to raise it because it is a very serious matter and I would certainly expect that I do not get any more long talk, like I have been getting, and get some action on it. I want to see some action and I want to make that point in relation to the Urban Development Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about housing. It is a very good thing that Government is selling the housing units to the tenants. It is something I have been advocating for a long time because I am one of those representatives who have two large Government housing areas in my constituency. I know what it was like to go into my fourth election, in 2003, making the same statement that the units will be sold to

you. Mr. Speaker, it is not easy making the same promise for four straight elections.

Therefore, I am very pleased to see that the process is now up and running. I want to congratulate the Minister of Housing and the former Minister as well. Sir, yesterday the former Minister of Housing made reference to work being done on the Green Hill main road and he highlighted only one Honourable Member of Parliament who had brought it to his attention when, in fact, I was the first person agitating for it. The Honourable Member did that to me but I will still be man enough to say that he did some good work in the area of housing and laid some groundwork in relation to the sale of the terrace units to tenants.

Sir, I heard some figures being bandied around the cost of these units and that there are too expensive; an Honourable Member mentioned the figure \$115 000. I have received a number of calls from constituents at Eden Lodge since they have received letters from the National Housing Corporation indicating that they are entitled to purchase their units. I have seen some of the letters and I have also spoken to some of the tenants from Eden Lodge and none of them indicated that a figure that was quoted to them regarding the cost of the unit.

I hope that we are not looking at a lack of integrity in anyone when they mentioned these astronomically high figures because I do not know of any case in Eden Lodge, as at today's date, who has been quoted a figure that would have reached even half of \$115 000. All the people in Eden Lodge have called me but certainly I do not know any case where the figure quoted is even half of that amount.

I think that Honourable Members would do well to embrace this programme. I am very disappointed in the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West because I think that the Honourable Member has a little something in him in terms of integrity and decency. I credit him with that, I really do. I am surprised to see that he is against this programme.

H25:

11.50 p.m. Sequence 113

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

To say that you are for it and then everything you say reflects that you are against it, means that you are against it. I would really like the Honourable Member to get on board with this programme because his constituency has two or three of the largest Government housing developments. Therefore, he should, if he was smart, try to ingratiate himself into this programme rather than try to resist it.

Mr. Speaker, he singled out the residents of Eden Lodge of getting a better deal than his constituents in relation to the sale of the units but I am not aware that any one housing area is getting better treatment than the others. However, if that is so, I would proudly take the credit for it and say that I was agitating for it, so I am very pleased to see that he believes that my constituents are getting a better deal than his which, of course, says something about the level of representation that we provide, but I am not going to go into that part of it today.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister is doing a very good job in the Ministry of Housing. While her policies are very sound, I believe though that the problems lie in the fact that there is a disconnect between what the Minister enunciates as the policy and what is, in fact, happening by the persons charged with implementing the policy.

The Government's housing policy with the housing units is very sound. To just give a few examples, you have a situation where Government clearly states that if someone is living in a housing unit and they are in arrears and they cannot pay, that they should not be evicted for the arrears of rent. Therefore, the National Housing Corporation is supposed to do a means test to see whether or not the person is being deliberately recalcitrant or is generally unable to pay.

I have cases in my constituency where the locks of the units were being changed although neither the official tenant nor anybody who lives in the house is working. That is a fact. People are not working and the locks are being changed which means that no investigation at all went into the decision to change the locks and to evict the tenants.

Mr. Speaker, I know of one case in which a person's brother had to go to a credit union to get a few dollars to take to the National Housing Corporation in order to get back into the unit. The brother could only raise a \$1 000 from the \$3 000, but the National Housing Corporation refused to take the \$1 000 and said that they had to bring at least \$1 500 because they were not taking less than half, which made no sense at all.

Somebody goes to the National Housing Corporation with cash in hand, after having to scramble to get the money in the first place, and then they are going to take the policy that they were not taking it and were not going to let the tenant back into the unit unless they bring half of the arrears in a situation where nobody in the household was working. If that case was properly investigated, that person would not have found the locks changed, but this is at the level of the operatives.

I also heard the Minister speak of a number of different emergency cases. Mention was made of house fires, that is the usual one, but then there are court evictions. The Minister therefore made the point that a Member of Parliament should not believe that a person from his constituency should be able to get a preference over someone who is in that position.

Mr. Speaker, I can also provide a list of people from my constituency who fit into every category of emergency mentioned by the Minister who has somehow not managed to get a house. There is a lady in my constituency whose house was driven into by a van in the early hours of New Year's day. The house was a very old house with no steel in it. A high wind will blow the house down, but to this day although she has three children she cannot get a house. The Minister said that situations like hers are emergency and priority cases and I accept that.

I also have cases where I have letters from the court evidencing that persons have been ordered by the court to leave the houses but I cannot get houses for them. I am saying that the Minister's policy is clear but the operatives at the National Housing Corporation are doing what they feel like doing. It is as simple as that, because how can they explain what I just outlined to this Honourable Chamber?

Mr. Speaker, this is really the biggest contradiction that exists between policy and what is happening. It is expressly stated in terms of rent arrears in a brochure that was published by the National Housing Corporation and distributed I believe at the Town Hall meetings that rent arrears will be incorporated into the cost of the units.

In the context of that statement in that brochure and in the context of the fact that the sale process has started, how can you have the usual policy of evicting for arrears of rent? These are examples of the disconnect between what the Minister is saying, which is sound policy, and what the operatives are doing. That is why sometimes Members of Parliament have to speak. However, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament in their complaining must recognise that sometimes it might be the right message but it might be the wrong messenger because some of the messengers who are in a position to help sometimes hog the show and get on as though the Ministries to which they are attached belong to them, so while sometimes you would hear the right message in here, sometimes it is the wrong messenger who brings the message.

Mr. Speaker, I did not get to deal with the public works fiasco but I will probably get an opportunity at some stage to deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning, I fully support the measure before this Honourable Chamber. The Honourable Member for St. John is always a prophet of doom and gloom, so nothing will work in St. Michael North West, but I take him for what he really is. He would never support this Government in anything that it does and he will never support this country. He will practise partisan politics before anything else. He is the only Barbadian I know who went on a radio programme with a Trinidadian and a Barbadian Minister and took sides with the Trinidadian. Mr. Speaker, nothing that he said would therefore surprise me.

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, I am sorry that I could not develop the points further, but I am indebted to you.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, we are living in very challenging times. An aspect of the great challenge that faces us as a nation even as a global society in the first decade of the 21st Century has represented itself in the emergence of what I call a global fiscal crisis.

As I speak to you, Mr. Speaker, the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Great Britain is presenting his Budget embodying a deficit that is bigger than that in relative terms of the Government of Barbados, but which is not going in our direction of being reduced, but going in the direction of being expanded.

Mr. Speaker, when the Governors of the States in the United States of America meet these days, the principal issue on the agenda is the financial crisis facing all of the States. In California, the sixth largest economy in the world, a governor was changed because the financial position was not sustainable. There is hardly a state in the United States of America that is not facing financial disorder. Cities like New York are facing financial disorder, approaching a state of anarchy.

In Europe the principal strongest economies of the world, Germany and France, are in danger of breaching rules of fiscal discipline set as a condition for their participation in the European Union and

are sustaining fiscal positions which, if they had themselves to be assessed by credit-rating agencies, would cause them to receive negative and defaulting ratings.

House 25 Sequence 11412:

00 noon

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

Mr. Speaker, in our own region, there is a situation of virtual penury in some Caribbean countries. There are situations in the main, where some countries deficits are in excess of 10 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). These countries are in great difficulties.

In Latin America, there would have been societal disorder involving and requiring change of Governments. Large numbers of Governments change because of the financial distress that has overtaken some large economies of the world.

Mr. Speaker, we are living in challenging times and in presenting these Estimates to the Honourable House, I have stated that they were driven by the intention and preoccupation of the Ministry of Finance, to try to endow ours with a spirit of stability, without losing a feel for, and without stopping the reach for the full transformation and development of this country.

Mr. Speaker, in the context of the challenging times in which these Estimates were conceived, I do feel that they have succeeded wonderfully well in establishing and sustaining that essential balance between stability and continuing genuine broad base transformation of this society.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to begin by thanking the public officers of Barbados and the public officials in the various Ministries who, since September, have had to preside over the preparation of some of the most complex challenging Estimates that have ever been brought to this Honourable House. It is not easy to preside over the preparation of Estimates that have, as their core, the reduction in a deficit, while continuing to support development.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to thank and would wish to have the House be associated with an expression of gratitude to the Director of Finance, Mr. Grantley Smith, my Permanent Secretaries, and all of the officers in the various Ministries who have worked very hard. Sir, above that, there is a handful of persons working as Budget Analysts in the Ministry of Finance, who would have had to work days, nights and weekends, in preparing these Estimates, yet while bringing Supplementaries to the House. I would especially want to thank them for doing such a glorious job.

Sir, having said that, when they listen to this Honourable House debating the Estimates that would bring stability and genuine transformation, Estimates that they would have had such an important role in preparing, I would hope that they would feel that the debate was equal to their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I feel and I fear I have to say on their behalf, that the tremendous hard work they have

done to bring Estimates of this nature, intending to achieve the purpose to which I said they are to achieve, has been frustrated by the debate in your House.

Mr. Speaker, first I will deal with my side. These are challenging times and you will remember last year I spoke to the people of Barbados and said that only a disciplined political organisation could be depended upon to lead a mature and serious country during challenging times. At that time, I had asked the people of this country to entrust me with the mandate of leadership, in the belief that we would take this country through challenging times, principally by the exhibition of discipline, married to innovation.

Sir, as I said, these Estimates reflect fiscal discipline. The Government of Barbados is not going to go the way of the British, the United States of America, France or German Governments. There will be fiscal discipline but we will do it without losing sight of the need to continue with the transformation of this country.

Sir, the mandate that must be expressed from this Floor, even amidst the debate, the dissent and whatever else - and there will always be dissent - must be a focus on the financial, economic and institutional disciplines, without which one cannot be faithful to a mandate to lead a deserving country during challenging times.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said and want to keep repeating, the Floor of this Parliament will have to preside over the most far-reaching changes in the history of Barbados, and all of us who will be in this Parliament during this term, will either stand out in history as having succeeded in leading Barbados through its most far-reaching and wrenching change, or having been part of a collective and monstrous failure for having missed the opportunity of the confidence of the people of Barbados for dealing with other than the people's business on the Floor of the people's Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how much longer I have in public life, but I give the people of Barbados the assurance that I have asked for a mandate to lead because the times are challenging, and that there will be discipline.

Sir, the Ministry of Finance's staff and all my officers have worked hard and in 30 years of public life, I cannot remember a period where I have had to work harder, other than, of course, up to the last two months, to do what had to be done to get these Estimates debates.

Mr. Speaker, I give the Honourable House the assurance that the transformation of the Barbados society in a disciplined way will be the focus of this Administration that I lead. Therefore, I would expect that there would obviously be dissent when people come to the House to speak to constituency issues but none of us on the Government's side should believe that we have been given a mandate to use the Floor of this Parliament for any reason other than to focus on the way in which to carry forward the people's business.

I also gave the Honourable House the assurance that if there were other considerations that engage the Honourable Members on Government's side, that these considerations should be expressed but it cannot be done at the expense of carrying forward the people's business.

Mr. Speaker, that is our mandate and this Party would not be deserving of the support of the people

who put us here, if we feel that we have a recourse other than to use the Floor of this Parliament for things other than advancing the people's business.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party is one of the oldest and most matured parties in the Western Hemisphere. It knows how to accommodate dissent but, at the same time, the purposes of this Party are not bigger than the purposes of the people of Barbados, who have given us a mandate to lead them in difficult times. Therefore, if the Party fails that mandate, I will tell the people of Barbados that they are not deserving of their support.

This Parliament in this term and my contribution to it, will be about making sure that this country is successfully taken through challenging times, and that we bequeath a society that is better, more prosperous, more cohesive and more Barbadian, than that which we have inherited, to a next generation of persons in this country.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to the Opposition's side, I want to extend my greatest gratitude to the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central for his speech. Sir, people tend to feel that they are condemned by the politics of inclusion by making reference to something which was commendable but I thought the speech by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central was a speech that was balanced and mature.

H:No. 25 (115)1200 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

It reflected a perspective of a person dealing with a mature society.

In these acrimonious partisan days, it is always easy for persons to rise above the partisan nature of politics. It is particularly a difficulty of the Democratic Labour Party which, like a cushion, bears the imprint of the person who last sat upon it and all his partisan nastiness. For someone in the Party to join the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and rise about the partisanship and the acrimony is commendable and I appreciate his contribution.

Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, the contribution of the Opposition ranges from the balanced and mature to the bizarre. I say "bizarre", not in a contemptuous way. I like the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and I think he is a person who has a basic decency. I generally believe he is a patriot but he has come to public life, in my view, in the belief that in Parliament you must pompasette, lick down and break down and that is a sad approach for a person I know can do better. It represents itself in the form of him having to invent and put up scenarios and then tear them down. I will respond in a bombastic way because I know that he can do better.

Sir, it is alleged that he is a doctor but I think we can hereinafter call him a faith healer.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

The Honourable Member sets up these things he fancies he feels, and then seeks to cure them and, hereinafter, we have to call him a faith doctor. It reminds me of a limerick

“There was a faith healer of Deem

Who said although pain is not real

When I sit on a pin and it punctures my skin,

I dislike what I fancy I feel.”

Sir, his whole speech told us what he dislikes and what he fancies he feels. Even if the Constitution says that the Budget must be done in a certain way, he fancies it to be something else, and expresses the dislike of what he fancies he feels. Mr. Speaker, Sir, hereinafter, we shall have to refer to him as the faith healer from Deem. Sir, it was a speech that is typical of what we come to expect from him.

Sir, three essential issues have been raised by the Opposition that I want to compartmentalise. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy tries to add to the process as he seeks to do in his own way. I will not comment on the other speeches because in some respects they reflect the fact that members of the Opposition are giving the House the full benefit of their inexperience and are victims of a process of political conditioning that was borrowed from a previous political leadership when they were both misled and unled and I will not criticise them.

My constituent from St. Peter, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West seems not to want to disconnect the Democratic Labour Party from that political conditioning that makes the Party both misled and unled. When a Party finds itself in those conditions and its politics are driven by those kinds of contrivances, it can never come back.

However, there are three broad issues I want to respond to and I will do so systematically. The first issue is that the Government says it is doing its best to control the deficit and that the attainment of 2.5 per cent deficit is a great achievement.

The Opposition's counter to that is, we are misleading the House, the country, we are concealing things, there are things which are off-budget, it is against the Constitution, it is against our Laws and that what we are putting up as the real facts did not represent the reality.

We also hear this talk about off-budget projects being unconstitutional and against the Law and do not reflect the policy of the Government. These things come from people who are misled and I explain why. Mr. Speaker, if I may digress for one moment.

In 1994, there was a seminar for new parliamentarians to expose them to public accounting, budgeting and the Financial Rules. Perhaps this House should pause and expose people to such a seminar because people speak in relation to popular perception but not on the basis of what are the facts.

Mr. Speaker, this budget process is to allow the House to approve the Government's budget where it is expressed in the Constitution and only things that are charged against the Consolidated Fund can be part of Government expenditure. There is a popular perception that all of Government's revenues must go into the Consolidated Fund but that is not true.

The Constitution of Barbados and the Financial Administration and Audit Act establishes the Consolidated Fund but does not establish as an absolute condition, but as a restrained condition, that the revenue of Government must go to the Consolidated Fund. Sir, I will explain why this is so.

Mr. Speaker, I will read the Constitution of Barbados:

"There shall be in and for Barbados a Consolidated Fund which, subject to the provision of any law for the time being enforced in Barbados, shall repay all revenues of the Government."

Sir, it is subject to the provision of any other law enforced.

I will read Section 8 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and I wish the Press would follow it:

"Subject to the provision of any other Act for the time being enforced, the revenues of Barbados shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund."

Sir, the drafters of the Constitution and the Financial Administration and Audit Act prescribed that there can be other enactments that create receptacles for revenues of the Government, the most classic of which, as the Democratic Labour Party knows, was their creation of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund as the instrument to receive the revenues from privatisation.

There have been a number of Acts created by Parliament which created statutory agencies and the Acts prescribed that the revenues from those agencies should accrue to the enterprises themselves and do not have to accrue to the Consolidated Fund - Mr. Speaker, the National Housing Corporation, the Barbados Port, the National Insurance Board and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation.

Sir, more to the point we can have specific pieces of legislation that allow entities other than the Consolidated Fund to receive Government's revenues.

The Constitution says that:

"The Estimates of Expenditure shall show separately the funds require to meet other expenditure paid out of the Consolidated Fund."

Sir, expenditures that are to be met other than from the Consolidated Fund, therefore, do not have by the Constitution to be shown nor debated in Parliament. This is not new. This has been the case ever since the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I will illustrate. All of the capital projects of the National Housing Corporation, like the building of West Terrace, have never been shown here because the rents of the National Housing

Corporation do not go into the Consolidated Fund but into the coffers of the National Housing Corporation as prescribed by the Act which created the National Housing Corporation.

H25/12:20

Sequence 116

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

If the revenue goes in there, the expenditure associated with a government capital housing programme will not be shown.

Mr. Speaker, operating under its own law and collection and its own charges, a port expansion project will not be shown there either.

Sir, when the National Insurance building at Culloden Road was being built, under the Democratic Labour Party's term in office, that was not shown there either. Is it unlawful?

Sir, I go further. The Financial Administration and Audit Act recognises that there could be other revenue recipients for the Government other than the Consolidated Fund. It says at Section 19, and I have to read them together:

"The Accountant-General shall keep with such bank or banks as the Minister may from time to time determine an account to be known as The Treasury Account."

Sir, this is how the Treasury Account is to be constituted:

"Monies at the credit of the Consolidated Fund and other public monies..."

Section 20 recognises that you could have public money in the Consolidated Fund and other public monies.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

On a point of order. I just want to preface my comments by saying that I hope that this discussion will be seen as non contentious.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Speaker, I rose on a point of order because I wanted to hear from the Right Honourable Prime Minister. I am going to put my case and then I will hope that this will be done.

Mr. SPEAKER:

What is your point of order, Sir?

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

That the Right Honourable Prime Minister is misleading the House because the matter to which we referred was the way in which Government utilised the borrowings of the Government in financing projects which were classified as off-budget.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, you have risen on a point of order but you have not referred to anything that was stated.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable Prime Minister is saying that projects such as the Port and others have been financed and they do not necessarily have to be financed out of the Consolidated Fund.

I am saying that the Right Honourable Prime Minister has also admitted that the funds put aside for a rainy day have been used to finance GEMS, the Hilton and other such projects in Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, order please, order please. Let me explain to you that a point of order relates to what has been said. You have given your clarification. Honourable Member you cannot now go on in a point of order to give a clarification or any explanation. You cannot do that, Sir. Please take your seat, Sir. Please take your seat, Sir.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

I will get my opportunity to speak at length, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, the question relating to how the Government has provided loans to institutions, I shall come to.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Sir, throughout this debate and as recent as the speech made by the Honourable Member for St. John, who has fled, I want to deal with him and how he did not deal with Parliament the way it should be dealt with. He said that we had several off-budget projects. The Constitution of Barbados, by prescribing that revenue, can go other than to the Consolidated Fund, legitimises that projects are carried on by the Government and its agencies from revenue available to them off-budget because the Budget is, as the Constitutions says "any charges against the Consolidated Fund", and there is nothing wrong with that.

Mr. Speaker, on the matter relating to loans: The Government of Barbados has the right to put money into special deposits, according to Section 25, to make those loans available to entities on terms agreed

by the Cabinet. Section 25 replaces a former Section 25(a) that used to be a validation of the action taken by the Democratic Labour Party ...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

There used to be a Section 25(a) which validated the actions that the Democratic Labour Party took that ruined the country in 1991. In 1991, the Democratic Labour Party ran this country into the ground by utilising the printing of money by the Central Bank. It ran the overdraft up to 17½ per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and that was under Section 25(a).

Mr. Speaker, Section 25(a) states that loans which are given by the Government to Government enterprises and non governmental enterprises shall be secured by way of a loan agreement or debenture, depending on the circumstances, the terms of which are to be agreed by Cabinet. That is the Law.

If the Opposition wants that all loans extended from a special deposit or even the Treasury accounts, because the Treasury accounts do not come here either, come to this Honourable House, Government could have other bank accounts that are not part of the Consolidated Fund come here too because there is something called the “Treasury Account” that is different from the Consolidated Fund.

If the Honourable Member wants all to be brought here...

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

On a point of order. The Prime Minister is now misleading this Honourable Chamber and I want to say here that in the Financial and Administration Act, Cap 5, it describes revenue of Government. I read

“Revenues means all levies, taxes, rates, duties, fees, penalties, forfeitures, rents and dues, proceeds of sale and all other receipts of the Crown from whatever sources arising over which Parliament has the power of appropriation but does not include the proceeds of short-term loans.”

Therefore, it includes the proceeds of loans.

Mr. Speaker, the thing is

Mr. SPEAKER:

Please, please. There cannot be “the thing is”. You have made your point of order. You cannot go on. You have made your point of order, Sir.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make one other point with respect to the Financial Administration and Audit Act.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Proceed. You go on.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

It goes on to say

“Subject to the provisions of this or any other Act for the time being in force, the revenues of Government...”, which we just identified within this administration, “the revenues of Barbados shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund.”

The Treasury Account is only a back account and not the Consolidated Fund, which I will deal with later.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, there is no issue as regards to what constitutes Government’s revenue. The issue is whether all of Government’s revenue has to be paid into the Consolidated Fund. The Constitution prescribes that what we have to deal with here are charges against the Consolidated Fund. Mr. Speaker, that is the point.

Mr. Speaker, we could have a situation, as we have had, where the Democratic Labour Party sold Government’s property and put the proceeds into the Public Enterprise Investment Fund to the extent that it goes into the Public Enterprise Investment Fund. The provision of the Constitution in relation to what the Estimates should be with charges against the Consolidated Fund does not apply to it.

Sir, I said that we desperately need that seminar, so that statutory expenditures are proposed to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reforms I think this Honourable House should agree to is to have the consolidated public sector Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure brought here.

H25:

12.30 p.m

Sequence 117

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

However, the limitation is that we are involved in a process prescribed by the Constitution which states that these Estimates we are debating here today relate to charges in relation to the Consolidated Fund. If we create another fund by another enactment and we are not going out of the Consolidated Fund, there is no requirement that it has to be brought by this process, which is the point we were making all along. Sir, historically, all of the Government’s major projects which are carried out by statutory institutions that have revenue that is not counter-pinnacle have never been brought to this House.

Mr. Speaker, I wish the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would get over this because I can begin to understand why the Democratic Labour Party in the form of its previous leadership is so afraid of this issue. Mr. Speaker, in my parliamentary experience, there is one and only one transaction of any major substance that should have been brought to this Parliament and reflected as expenditure that has never been brought to this Parliament and reflected as expenditure which is being referenced every year by the Auditor-General in his Report.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West should listen to experience because in 1994 under the leadership of the person who he served for only seven months as an advisor, the Government was involved in a transaction. It was reforming the Barbados National Bank and it bought out the agricultural portfolio of the Barbados National Bank and transferred \$280 million in debt to the Barbados Agricultural Trust Company Limited - buying debt is an expenditure - and paid for the debt by the issue of Treasury Bills and it was never brought to this House.

The transaction has never been concluded from an accounting point of view because if the Honourable Member for St. John had brought that transaction involving the Barbados National Bank and the buying out of the agricultural debt to the House, it would have inflated the deficit beyond what the limit of the Government of the day prescribed.

Every year since then the Auditor-General of Barbados makes reference to the fact that \$280 million of expenditure that should have been brought to this Parliament and approved as an expenditure by this Government was not brought here and he keeps making the point that at some stage it has to be brought to an account. Mr. Speaker, this is how the Auditor-General puts it under the heading of "Statement of Public Debt and Sinking Funds" at 2.26 in the Auditor-General's Report of 2002.

"The outstanding balance includes securities with nominal values of \$200,090,000 which were issued in 1994 to assist with the restructuring of Government's financial institutions. No consideration was received for these securities. These transactions will remain incomplete - the accounting remains incomplete - until either proceeds are received and recorded or the loans are repaid."

Mr. Speaker, the next thing that happened is that the Government bought the debt of the Bank - you can buy debt - and put it into the Barbados Agricultural Trust Company Limited and gave the Bank Treasury Notes in lieu of the debt, so the expenditure should have been shown with the financing being the issue of Treasury Notes, but that has never been done. Therefore, I would wish the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who does not have that tainted history to desist from joining foolish people in coming to this House to talk foolish things.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that the Law at section 25 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act should be changed and we should all agree that all of the loans granted by the Government should be approved by Parliament. I have no difficulty with that. But until that becomes the Law, what is the Law that has to be followed?

Mr. Speaker, the Press must follow these things because the Democratic Labour Party is walking around the country talking about how the Government has breached the Law, but the fact is that the Law in relation to these matters has to be approved by Cabinet.

Sir, on page 14 of the Auditor-General's Report for 2003, the matter of the loan to Hotels and Resorts Limited, Needham's Point Holdings and Grantley Adams International Airport Incorporated is cited. The Auditor-General then cites section 25 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act which requires that loans which are given by the Government to government enterprises that the terms of the loans are to be agreed by the Cabinet. That is what the Auditor-General has said. He has not said, as the Democratic Labour Party is telling the country, that what we did was illegal or in breach of the Law.

He said at 2.18 that audit investigations revealed that the relevant loan agreements are in place. Sir, if there was any impropriety, he would have had a duty to say that what the Government has done is financially improper and contrary to the Law and would have cited it as a matter that needs ratification.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a case of monumental folly. There is a popular opinion in Barbados that all Government's revenues have to be paid into the Consolidated Fund. That is not true. This Cabinet can create any act to authorise any entity to receive Government's revenues.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

On a point of order. The Prime Minister is misleading the House. It says at section 3 of the Financial Administration and Audit Act that the revenues of Government shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Enterprise Investment Fund that was put into law in 1993 can be used without the approval of Parliament. We all know that there are four such accounts. Therefore, if the revenues of Government shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund, all long-term loans are part of the revenues of this country and the Public Enterprise Investment Fund which can be used did not contain more than \$5 million at the time when Hotel and Resorts Limited received the \$145 million from the Government of Barbados. It therefore means that the loan could not have come from the Public Enterprise Investment Fund, but had to have come from the loans existing at the Central Bank which are part of the revenues of the Government of Barbados as defined in the Financial Administration and Audit Act which shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund, and Parliament has the power of appropriation.

I am therefore saying, Mr. Speaker, that it is time for reform because no Government should be allowed to lend \$440 million to any enterprise without having to come to Parliament.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

On a point of privilege. All of us are Members of this legislature and require that at the very least we be not impugned by persons seeking to mislead the public in relation to the Laws of this land. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has now conspired to mislead this House by starting the reading of section 3(1) of the Financial Administration and Audit Act without reading the full sentence. Mr. Speaker, the record of this Chambers require that this be read into the record, and I read

"Subject to the provisions of this or any other Act for the time being in force, the revenues of Barbados shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund."

House 25 Sequence 118

12:40 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY:

Even a first-year law student who has not spent any time in Government would understand that the statement coming at the end after the comma:

“The revenues of Barbados are constrained by the limitation that it is subject to any other provisions, either in this Financial Administration Act, or any other piece of legislation.”

Mr. Speaker, therefore, it is not an absolute statement. It admits of Public Enterprise Investment Fund and any other forms of loans or revenues that can be applied in a way that the Parliament has prescribed.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West wants us to say that proceeds from long-term loans are part of revenue, that is true, but that is not the issue. Even if they are part of revenue, there is no requirement that they have to go into the Consolidated Fund alone. The Law says that subject to any other provisions, the revenue can go into the Consolidated Fund or into other places that the Act prescribes.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is of the view that because it is a long-term loan, it is part of revenue. Yes, it is part of the revenue but it does not prescribe that it has to go into the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, like the Public Enterprise Investment Fund and other Below-the-Line accounts, transactions can be made as Government's activities without them having to be brought to the Honourable House if there are not charges on the Consolidated Fund. The Constitution requires that what we are dealing with in these Estimates are charges against the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, there has always been off-budget activities by Government. The question whether the Government should be involved in things such as bid, operate and transfer arrangements, is now an issue with the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, I am trying to warn the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West that in these matters, he should not pick up the fire rage of a past failed regime.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to broaden this debate on privatisation because one of the matters on which the Leader of the Opposition has sought to create the impression is this big divide on privatisation. The issue of privatisation started in 1986 when the Democratic Labour Party reacted to the building of Heywood's Hotel and the Arawak Cement Plant by saying that we were selling a lot of public properties.

In fact, in the Estimates debate of 1987, the late Leader of the Democratic Labour Party, the Right Honourable Errol Barrow, was part of the debate and had committed the Democratic Labour Party to

initiate the process of privatisation of Government's enterprises.

Sir, it did not start with us but with the Democratic Labour Party in 1986/1987. I would, therefore, urge Honourable Members who want to understand where we are today, to go and read some of the records of this Parliament. The founding fathers of the Democratic Labour Party had supported that Resolution. The Honourable Philip Greaves had also supported it.

Mr. Speaker, in 1992, the Honourable Member for St. John came to this House and gave us a statement on privatisation, along with a statement how the deficit should be controlled in the future. Sir, let me tell you some of the ways in which he said the deficit should be controlled. The Honourable Member for St. John said that the Government would have implemented a programme of privatisation and would have utilised as appropriate some of the following modalities:

- (a) Partial or total divestment of several state -owned enterprises.
- (b) Leasing of certain facilities to the private sector.
- ©) The management of state-owned institutions by private sector management contracts.
- (d) Construction of new projects through innovative, bid, operate or other arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, as far back as 1992, it was being recognised that bid, operate or transfer arrangements would have to be part of it. Sir, not only did he state the principle, the Democratic Labour Party set the ball in motion. They commissioned a group of big, white businesses in Barbados to engage in the first bid, operate and transfer arrangements. Sir, do you want to know how they financed it? It was financed by the head tax that should have been coming into the Consolidated Fund.

The Cruise Terminal at the Port was the first expression of an intention by Government to have a bid, operate or transfer arrangement. They paid it by diverting the head tax that we are now being told that should be so sacrosanct, that the Consolidated Fund should have received it, and that it should have come here where we should be approving its disbursement.

Sir, the Barbados Cruise Terminal was allowed to become a tax collector and tax that should have been coming into the Consolidated Fund was diverted to it, to pay for that building.

Sir, this present group who do not carry those kinds of paints should be careful when associating themselves with the foolishness that is now being said. They are being told of how wicked we are. Sir, you would have heard the Honourable Member for St. John, who has fled from his seat, "pompasetting" about how these things are off-budget, but he did not say that this was brought by him. The Honourable Member for St. John has spoken about what they were going to privatise.

Mr. Speaker, in 1992, the extent of the privatisation contemplated by the Democratic Labour Party as stated in the statement by the then Honourable Minister of Finance, was that he was going to sell the Transport Board. Sir, we put a pause to that. Sir, even the Insurance Corporation of Barbados was agreed to be privatised before we came into office.

Sir, let me, therefore, say to the Honourable House that all of what the Government is doing in terms of bid, operate and transfer arrangements, could only now be opposed by the Honourable Member for St. John especially, and the Democratic Labour Party in particular, if they have a morning voice and an evening action because this is precisely what they prescribed as the way forward. They are now condemning it to the people of Barbados in the worst terms, when there was a most comprehensive statement on privatisation ever made by an Honourable Minister in this House, stating that privatisation was part of an effort to bring growth and development. Now men are running from it.

Sir, I am begging the Honourable Members on the Other Side who were not part of the pre 1994 situation, to stop being embarrassed by taking positions that they cannot defend in the light of what was then decided, which is a housing policy.

Sir, in public life things have to stand the test of reasonableness. My Government has a policy on the sale of rental units. I said they were reasonable when we went to the National Housing Corporation's meeting at Maynards. When I went to Church Village, Mr. Warrick Franklyn said that they were reasonable. We had those units valued. We gave a 25 per cent discount off the value as the base for the selling price. We then gave a discount as a proportion of the rent up to 40 per cent and then we gave a rebate. I think that is reasonable, and that people can get houses at reasonable rates.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party is now coming to tell us that it is a wicked policy. We are now hearing the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West saying that he would have gone back, would have taken the value of the rent paid in 1967, would have found today's value of what was paid in 1967 and 1968, would have added it up and would have removed all of that, et cetera.

Sir, the fact is that the Democratic Labour Party had the opportunity to express a position as a Government on this matter and had taken such a decision at Cabinet.

H:No. 25 (119)1250 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

Sir, Only the change of Government in 1994 stopped it from executing a policy in relation to the sale of units and I have a duty today to tell this Honourable House what their policy was.

Sir, on September 23, 1993, the Cabinet considered a note and agreed that all tenants at Bonnetts, St. Michael, The Ivy, St. Michael; Rosemont, St. Michael; Lammings, St. Joseph; Maynards, St. Peter; Haynesville, St. James and Church Village, St. Phillip would be offered the units for sale under a lease-purchase arrangement according to an agreed formula. Sir, the 125 remaining tenants who live in single units and who so far have not accepted the offer of the purchase should be now offered the units for sale under a lease-purchase arrangement.

Sir, we are saying 40 per cent of the rents, but the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is saying that we should go back to 1967 and give them all the rent. Not only give them all the rent but

compound the value of the rent by stating what was spent then as rents and convert it into today's values. What did the Democratic Labour Party say about that matter? They said that where the tenants are not in arrears, any amounts paid after November 1, 1989 should be credited towards the cost of the house. They are saying go back four years and the rents paid between 1989-1993 and give them credit for that period.

Sir, we have the Leader of the Democratic Labour Party telling us that the policy can only now be fair if we go back to 1967 and not only add up the rents from 1967 and come forward but also say what the rent paid in 1967 would be worth today and so on.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Sir, where such tenants are in arrears and sale arrangements should take place, sale arrangements should take place only after the arrears have been liquidated.

Sir, if the Democratic Labour Party's policy is implemented, if you owe \$25,000 and you want to buy the house, before you even being to discuss the purchase of the house, you have to pay \$25,000.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please, order.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

It says that payment towards arrears should be separate and distinct from payment towards the lease of the house.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, I seek your protection, please.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order please. Order please.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

I am begging the Other Side not to come with any tactics but it must stand the test of reasonableness. That is all I am saying.

I mentioned that all the units in Bonnetts, The Ivy, Rosemont, Lammings, Maynard and Haynesville will be sold on an agreed formula. We said that the agreed formula will be that you take the value and subtract 25 per cent, and that was in September. Sir, by June 26, 1994, was when we agreed that this would be the agreed formula that would apply to the tenants.

Mr. Speaker, the lessees who opt to purchase within the next five years will be offered the unit at the market price prevailing.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a disgraceful moment.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Please continue.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

Mr. Speaker, Governments cannot be perfect. They have to take decisions based upon what is reasonable. I have had the opportunity to meet with the people of Maynards, in the presence of the Minister and the officials of the National Housing Corporation. I told my constituents that if the Government is offering an arrangement where you get a valuation and then you discount that by 25 per cent, it allows you a 40 per cent of the rent and a rebate up to \$5,000 for repairs. I feel that is reasonable.

I urge the Minister to go ahead and implement that reasonable policy, but I cannot stand to have this Government and the Minister being criticised for implementing that reasonable policy when they know that as late as June 1994, the Democratic Labour Party Administration was saying that the tenants had to be a market value, all the arrears had to be paid and any relief they would have received would not have gone back to 1967, as the Honourable Member was saying.

Sir, I am asking the whole country which package is the more reasonable? I would urge the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to understand one thing about leadership. I said that this country is reaching the carrying capacity in relation to what we can do by way of subsidised living in Barbados. Happily, we have a good society that has been built by our encouraging certain values in this land, for example, people believing that they can own something by their own initiative.

The Honourable Member, like me, would have read the book by Francis Fukuyama entitled "Trust", that distinguishes countries upon the basis to the extent that social trust has been built. Countries with low trust do not make it. Countries where people do not promote thrift and the feeling that even though you are poor, you can own something through your own efforts.

Mr. Speaker, there are still, in my judgement, a lot of poor people in Barbados who are owning property and will own property and who believe that the aspect part of owning that property is that they pay the legal fees and mortgages. My father and mother owned their property that way.

We have a tradition in this country where people start building their homes with what they can afford and as they can afford to do more, they do so. I am begging this Parliament not to start indulging in a new kind of mendicancy in relation to that which the Barbadian public has treated it as the most precious.

Our people, no matter how poor they are, still feel that they can come to own a house by their own initiative and when they own that house, they have paid the lawyer and the bank for it. Across the country there is still that strong sense of social trust.

Sir, I am very worried when I hear these messages going forward that the Government must now pay all the legal fees, although people in Barbados are still paying the legal fees. Also, that Government must take over the mortgages and the people must get houses free.

H25:

13.00 p.m.

Sequence 120

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

Mr. Speaker, we have a welfare system that caters to the indigent and poor but we must never come to live in a society where people are dissociated fundamentally from the responsibility of their own welfare. My advice to the Member is that we create an uncomfortable society when on the most fundamental thing, a man's home, we come to cause ordinary people in Barbados to believe that someone else must become responsible for their own welfare if they can manage on their own.

Sir, beyond the arithmetic and financial issues, there is the issue that goes to the heart of what kind of society are we seeking to create. Do we want to create a society that we know has been a good society where persons and parents as poor as mine felt it was still their duty to provide for their family's welfare as their means afforded, or do we want to begin to create a society where we rob our good citizens of any sense of initiative by imposing on the State obligations, which

quite frankly, are properly and appropriately carried by the individual if they can afford it? This is the divide, in my judgement, that makes this housing debate exciting.

Sir, the State has a welfare function and if people cannot pay their rents, it can be paid through the Ministry of Social Transformation. Sir, my grandmother fixed her house when she was an old woman and there is still the important tradition in this country that we are seeking to disturb by this overindulgence mentality.

The nature of Diamond Corner, in my constituency, is totally different from the one I knew when I came to Parliament. Every wooden house has been transformed into a concrete house. Sir, people worked hard and saved and none of it has been done by the Government. Let us discharge a housing policy that does not fundamentally disorganise orderly development by disassociating people who want to carry responsibility and who are able to do so and will do so with pride.

Mr. Speaker, the matter of the balance of payment of Barbados is one I want to pay more attention to. As you will recognise, we are controlling the fiscal deficit, but we are beginning to have problems with the current account deficit and the balance of payment.

Sir, I say now as an economist that this is for a good reason and that because of trade liberalisation as we remove import barriers, imports have increased and the removal of protection of industries has also affected export. In tourism, although we have done well in terms of arrivals, there has been a lot of discounting with the aftermath of September 11th to realize the tourism performance.

Mr. Speaker, the country either earns foreign exchange from the sale of goods and services or it has to rely on other expedients. We are reaching the point where our receipts from goods and services are now far less than our payments for goods and services. This means that one or two things must happen. We either have to borrow or rely on capital inflows.

The Government borrowed for balance of payment support in 2000 when trade liberalisation started, but the Government is not going to be involved in the foreseeable future in raising any loan to support the balance of payment. Hence, if we have these current account situations, there has to be a strong private capital inflow direct foreign investment as the preferred way of dealing with the balance of payments at this time.

Sir, this will have two impacts. The inflows will go into the balance of payments as capital inflows that you do not have to borrow and which we will only have to pay back if the enterprise is profitable. If it does not make any money, there are no capital outflows. It will have a long-term impact if we bring in the capital outflow to build foreign exchange generated capacity. You get the benefit over the long-term of expanding your capacity to generate foreign exchange.

Barbados, as a matter of deliberate policy, has to accelerate all those major projects that involve direct foreign investment that are designed to expand our foreign exchange earning capacity because we will have the capital inflows as a short-term benefit and the expansion of productive capacity as the long-term benefit.

Sir, there are a number of them. There is Sugar Hill Phase II, Sandy Lane Phase II, Apes Hill, the Retirement Villages, Harrison Point, Bushy Park, Pierhead and in the Honourable Member for St. Lucy's constituency, there are people who want to get involved in inland tourism.

Sir, the point is that in this country at this time we have a portfolio of projects involving large capital inflow and direct investment that will allow us to deal with the capital part of the balance of payments immediately as well as expand the productive capacity. Sir, I feel that by 2007 when we have to face the full blast of WTO and other liberalisation that we should have this capacity in place. I am saying this to Honourable Members in Parliament because I do not know how long I will be in here. I say that the only way we are going to be able to pay our bills after 2007/2008, is if today we agree to put in the capacity to generate the foreign exchange down the road.

Sir, I say this because every time a major project takes place in this country, there is this outburst of criticism about white people and foreigners owning the land but Barbados needs these inflows. For example, we cannot afford to let Paradise Beach, 30 acres of our land, remain idle, nor can we afford to

let the Sam Lord's exotic brand remain idle.

I hear Honourable Members of the Opposition saying that we have not been getting any chain, but we can develop our own chain. Sam Lord's Castle is the most exotic brand name in the Caribbean. Sandals and other chains have come after it but in Barbados we do not seem to think that we should develop our own chains but that we should rely on other people.

Sir, why should Almond Beach not become a major exporter of Barbados' entrepreneurship? Why do we feel that we have to be dependent on people to bring them to us and that we cannot get up and do them for ourselves?

Mr. Speaker, I say to this Parliament that the business of whether we attract chains or not is immaterial to the quality of the investment which we get. If we can get our own Barbadian indigenous investment or those that are not chains but can carry us forward as a high quality tourism destination that we should encourage it. There are things we would want to do in Barbados that the chains will not want to do because they have a standardised approach to tourism development.

Mr. Speaker, for example, we want to build retirement villages but the chains are not involved in this. There is a next great wave of development in Barbados' tourism which will be inland tourism. I speak about the Honourable Member for St. John's constituency where the first investment I ever approved as Minister of Finance was Villa Nova. I met with him constantly to see how best it could be expanded. It should have a beach resort because if you are in an inland environment you need to be able to offer your guests a beach experience, build it up with a conference facility and you would have a tremendous investment.

H25/13:10

Sequence 121

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

Mr. Speaker, every one of the inland tourism investments must have good dimensions, and we can do it. However, there has to be in this country a different approach to our relationship to direct foreign investment if we are to build the economy of the future and if we are going to deal with the balance of payments situation of today.

Mr. Speaker, I make the point to the House that there must be stability. We have reached a plateau of 2.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. I make the point again, Mr. Speaker, that I do not know how much longer I would be in public life but I will not, as a Minister of Finance, lead this country with an unsustainable debt position. Therefore, my stewardship as Minister of Finance, now that we have reestablished the plateau of stability, is to try to bring down the deficit even more and not to leave future generations or administrations with a debt problem.

Sir, we must not underestimate its severity. There are some Caribbean countries whose development has been stymied because even before they come to consider how best they can use their revenue for development purposes, it is already preempted by having to pay the debt. If you do not arrest it early, you preempt development. There will be things that will have to be done and I will want a serious Parliament to join us in doing these things sensibly.

Mr. Speaker, there are also some things that have to be reviewed. There are a number of fees that are associated with the performance of the sale of public services that have not been reviewed for 20 years. We have now reached the stage where, in some instances, the administrative cost in providing the service cannot be covered by the fees. The House would agree from my efficiency point of view that at least the fees should cover the administrative cost, so some of those things have to be re-established.

If there are major crises like water and so on, they must never again be settled in camera, that is, in secret, by the Government. We feel that any proposed change in water rates or busfare should be subjected to the scrutiny of public hearings and the institutions should have to come and justify why they want them and also to convince the Fair Trading Commission that they are not asking the public to pay for inefficiency. I put that matter out for what it is worth.

Mr. Speaker, there has to be a review of how we are providing public services because the carrying capacity of the State in terms of the concessions we give is reaching a limit. Mr. Speaker, sometimes because we are so close to it, we do not step back and reflect on what we have managed to accomplish in this country.

The United States of America cannot afford their citizens free education up to university level, as was told by the Inter-American Development Bank executive director, but we do.

In Barbados a person who has a heart condition can enjoy the reasonable expectation of being able to go to a hospital and have a heart surgery free of cost. These are bankrupt middle-class families in the United States of America, but we offer this as an entitlement to our people.

Through the National Housing Corporation we offer our people subsidised rents. The land which we sell is also subsidised. The Government has determined that the land cost component of any development at the National Housing Corporation should not be more than \$2.50 a square foot and we are subsidising the transfer of land in tenancies.

Mr. Speaker, our entitlement programme in a whole range of public services is one of the most attractive in the world and is not replicated in the experience of some of the most advanced countries.

We have a Drug Service that the United States of America is now seeking to replicate. Our Drug Service is second to none, but we take it for granted. John Kenneth Galbraith wrote a book called "A Culture of Contentment". Honourable Members of this Parliament who want to understand what we have to do going forward may need to read that book because a culture of contentment sets in that can vitiate the energy that is required to transform a country because people come to believe that entitlements come from heaven-like manna. Sir, I am saying that we are not going to walk backwards, but we have been reaching our carrying capacity.

Sir, there are some small impactful things we would be able to do but there is going to be a great difficulty for the future of our carrying any major new entitlement programmes. Even some that we are carrying and that we want to continue to carry, we are going to find that the cost of providing them are rising and rising.

I still hope, Mr. Speaker, that the premise upon which my Government had wanted to relate to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States could, at some day, be realised. All of us do not have to build the same educational institutions. In a confederate relationship we are going to rationalise that. They come back now to us to understand that all of them did not have to have their own separate police training centre and we are going back to what it was before.

Every Caribbean country in the Eastern Caribbean does not have to replicate the same health care institutions. They can designate centres of excellence and share them out because, in a real sense, the global crisis that I spoke about earlier is at the cost of providing Government and paying public servants decent wages. The cost of meeting Government is spiralling out of reach in California, France, Germany and all of the countries of the world are having a crisis, therefore, we should take stock.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by giving the House the assurance that the Opposition can expect nothing but cooperation from my Government if there is any matter concerning propriety of public finances that needs to be investigated. That is why I responded the way I did to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West because it is almost the implication that I would agree to see something improper being done and wink at it for partisan matter. I am not going to do that.

The Opposition can depend upon this Government for full cooperation in any matter that involves an investigation into anything they consider to be improper. I say that because in the Ministry of Finance there is now a culture that we would not wait for the Opposition to call, that we will commission these studies ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Honourable Members of the House, if they want to appreciate not only the spirit in which I speak, but the vantage point from which I speak, to read the Auditor-General's Report for 2003. In the Auditor-General's Report for 2003, the Ministry of Finance, not the Public Accounts Committee, carried out special examinations at the Licensing Authority, the Magistrate's Courts and the St. Leonard's School whether the resources were being used economically, efficiently and effectively.

This is not the first time the Ministry of Finance has done that. When we thought there were problems with the Government Printing Department, we did a special audit to give us an evaluation whether the Government resources were being used in accordance with the Law, economically, efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Speaker, when there was a problem with the School Meals' Department where we had reasons to believe that full propriety was not being observed in relation to expenditure of the public funds, we probed into it because this Ministry of Finance's perspective is that we not only want to have good and sensitive governance, but we want to have governance with full respect for fiscal propriety.

Mr. Speaker, I shall not wink at the slightest semblance of impropriety, no matter what entity is

involved and no matter - and I want to stress this to my side especially - what may be the semblance of embarrassment that we may temporarily face from its exposure.

The real embarrassment the Government faces is when you have people who should know better, who may be related to the Party in power who do things that are financially improper, but there is no action by the State on its own accord to deal with it unless under duress. That shall not happen with this Administration.

We would give our people every opportunity to be part of the development of this country. The Barbados Labour Party supporters must not feel that merely by reason of office they have any special prerogative not to follow the Financial Rules.

House 25 Sequence 122

1:20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

I want to stress that if there is even the most remote semblance of impropriety, my Ministry of Finance would ask for an investigation.

Sir, the Urban Development Commission has been in the news and has not been probed by the Public Accounts Committee. The Ministry of Finance has ordered a special investigation into its accounts and you can be sure that we are going to bring it here and lay it before the Honourable House.

The taxpayers of Barbados must feel confident that Government will not wink at things that cannot fit within the four walls of financial propriety. If allegations are being made, the only way in which those allegations could be addressed is to have investigations carried out.

Mr. Speaker, I give the Honourable Members of the Opposition that assurance. I have been in Parliament for 20 years. I feel more so than any other Honourable Member of this House as being a child of this Parliament because I have been serving continuously longer than anybody else and, therefore, I will not be party to any arrangements that will, in any way, derogate from the authority or responsibility of Parliament to administer the Laws of this country and to see that they are done with the best precepts of the Law.

Sir, I found the burden of the argument of the Opposition in this debate to be offensive because there are implications that we are prepared to accept fiscal impropriety. I am the first person who would agree that our fiscal system and accounts are outmoded. I will say for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, that this exercise allows for central Government's expenditures, made through the Consolidated Fund, to be part of our annual budgeting.

Perhaps we have to move to a consolidated public sector accounting and make provision for it in the

Law, but neither the Constitution, nor the Law, at present, allows for consolidated public sector accounting. Therefore, let us change the Law but until the Law is changed, I am constrained by what the Constitution says, which is to bring those things to Parliament and ask for approval, where they constitute charges against the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, on the next occasion I come to this Honourable House with a presentation like this, I would hope that the Management Commission of Parliament would have already met and would have started the process of changing the Standing Orders of the House so that we could have a meeting of minds as to what should legitimately become the appropriate considerations of the financial policies of the Government of Barbados and its agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to say that there is central Government and there is the Consolidated Fund. This is why I say we need a month for discussions. Sir, I feel that full accountability and transparency should be the process but if we are going to have a month, we cannot have a speech like that of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West. If he is going to speak in that vein, then I would say that to allow him to speak for a month would be to subject Barbadians to that which is prohibited in the Constitution, that is, to be exposed to the prospect of cruel and unusual punishment.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the concerns of the Honourable Members of Parliament that there is a legitimate concern where activities sponsored by State agencies are not the subject of scrutiny of Parliament in the same way as the expenditures of Government departments. Well, let us deal with it.

Sir, the amendment to the Constitution that is now being drafted, would lift the constraints that this Constitution now puts on persons, from the backs of this Parliament, because persons are not in a position in this debate to discuss things other than those charged on the Consolidated Fund, and that is what these Estimates are doing.

Mr. Speaker, let us go the way by changing the rules to accommodate it, by bringing all Government's accounts to the Honourable House and putting the House in the position where activities out of all Government's accounts have to be the subject of prior actualisation.

Sir, there is a lot of work to be done. The implication of the Government seeking to have a reduced deficit means that we are only going to have strong growth if there is greater private sector activity. That makes sense because by reducing the deficit, we are reducing the domestic purchasing power that the State's actions are creating because all of us would want to go to a sustainable growth path. It would, therefore, mean that there has to be a greater capacity of the private sector to carry more of the burden of growth in the country.

Mr. Speaker, there has been Public Sector Reform and though sometimes I am hard on Government, in much the same way that we are reviewing the process of public sector management and public sector controls, the most urgent thing that is required in Barbados is private sector reform.

Mr. Speaker, I gave the Honourable House the assurance that the Government is going to facilitate the implementation of all of the policies that were enunciated that can give a greater spirit to private sector activities but we expect more in terms of new institutional capacities from the private sector of Barbados.

Sir, for example, my Government has had to pay the private sector's way in participation in trade negotiations. The private sector people have refused to agree to accept the concession that for every dollar they contribute to the private sector organisation for trade negotiations, they can claim \$1.50.

Sir, in 1998, not a penny was claimed, yet people professed that they are able to plan production. Sir, unless one understands trade negotiations, then one's planning production or the parameters within which that production would take place in the future would not be possible. Therefore, we need to have a new sense of entrepreneurship from the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, the greatest waste of our resources is financial. We do not have a financial system in which every year there is a report of excess liquidity but, at the same time, as there is excess liquidity in the financial system, it has become the rule of the Government, and increasingly so, to create the financial institutions to meet the needs of risk-takers in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I do not accept that people in Barbados do not want to invest. We have had to create the Agricultural Development Fund; the Industrial Investment Fund; the Small Business Development Fund; the Innovation Fund; the Small Hotels Fund; the Tourism Investment Fund; Fund-Access and the Enterprise Growth Fund. That is the entire range of our productive sectors so that there are risk-takers out in the Barbadian heartland who want to be able to have access capital to invest.

The financial system is flushed, yet it has become increasingly the role of the State to create the financial intermediation vehicles to meet the needs of those people who want to take investment risks.

Sir, that has to be changed. In speaking about a private sector led growth path for this country, I am prepared to say that there are things which have historically been preserves of the public sector that we feel the private sector should do, for example, water and sewerage.

Sir, there must be the case that Barbados needs the private sector to involve itself in more development financing such as merchant and investment banking because unless the traditional character of the private sector and its domination by retail banking is changed, we are going to have this perpetuation of a situation where every year our people would save more, it would go into the banking system, people would want to invest and there would be something like a hardened artery where the energy of the blood cannot easily flow through because of the nature of the system. Sir, these things have to be changed.

H:No. 25 (123)130 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

The Government can use morale suasion, but Honourable Members come to this debate and indulge in the year ahead as to what this Parliament must do to change Barbados. I understand that Honourable Members would talk about their constituencies, vent their issues and this is part of the richness of Barbados.

In fact, I am fascinated when Honourable Members on my side lambast the leadership of this Party by saying they cannot speak their minds yet they come to this House and speak as forcibly as the Lord would allow. It is a wonderful paradox, Sir, that even as they say they cannot talk that they are talking loudly. It is a wonderful democracy!

Sir, these are the fundamental issues. I promise the House one thing, financial discipline. I have a group of persons working with me in the Ministry of Finance who try to be disciplined. We must understand how easy it is for us to lose that discipline because countries with greater resources than ours are losing it and nothing has been conferred on this country as a divine attribute that says we too cannot lose it. The House will get financial discipline both in relation to appropriation resources and accounting for the resources. I also feel there is a need for a great transformation in Barbados and for the next four years I hope to be a part of that great transformation.

Sir, I would really love to see these Estimates become more of an exercise rather than a venting of a fury by the expression of the creative imagination that would make sure that when history comes to be written, it will be said of this Parliament, the first Parliament of the 21st Century that we understood the great transformation that was required of us, and that each of us, in accordance with his ability, as God has given him the wisdom to see the light, make his or her contribution to that great transformation.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 235 p.m.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2:35 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. Speaker suspended the Sitting accordingly.

H25/13:32

Sequence 124

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

On the motion of Hon. R.R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. R.C. EASTMOND, the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. R.D. MARSHALL in the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

This House is now in Committee of Supply.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES OF 2004-2005 HEAD 32-MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE - \$37,085,355.00

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, Head 32, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade finds itself, yet again, leading off when we have arrived at the committee stage in the presentation of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. There are not, generally speaking, any large amount of dollars in respect of revenues from this Ministry. Mr. Chairman, I say that, as a gentleman well known to me would have said, "I said this to say that". We are starting at Page 151 in the Draft Estimates. If you look at Head 32 you will see that the funding required to carry out the plan of action for the Foreign Affairs Division for the financial year 2004-2005 in Barbados dollars is \$.136 million for current expenditure and almost \$1.4 million for capital expenditure.

Sir, the point I want to make is this. These figures we see in the Draft Estimates represent no more when you add Foreign Affairs and its Foreign Affairs Division within it. I specifically highlight Foreign Trade because the work of that Division is part of the highest priority which will attend the work of the Ministry in the coming financial year, as it has over the past two financial years, no more than 1.7 per cent of the Government's overall Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, minuscule.

I want to further point out, of that 1.7 per cent of Government's Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, perhaps, a little less than 70 per cent of the Ministry's vote is devoted to servicing the operations of our 10 Missions overseas.

I just want Honourable Members to have some understanding of the work which we do, how disproportionate, the effort of the hard-working staff of the Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, when you look at it in the overall.

In 1992, and happily for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, a sad thing happened. I said it in here before but I need to say it today again in the context of these Estimates. At a time of worldwide recession - not peculiar to Barbados - and Barbados was not as well governed then as it is now, Barbados suffered greatly. This is not a matter to be partisan on because at the end of the day it is Barbados that we are talking about.

H24:

14.40 p.m.

Sequence 125

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

In 1991 and 1992 when many of our CARICOM colleagues and other countries were selling their properties abroad which housed their chanceries and residences, rather than truncate the size of their staff complement in the Missions abroad, Barbados, alone in the CARICOM, made an unwise decision.

There was a night of the long knives and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade was cut to the bone. Mr. Chairman, 12 years later, in terms of staff complement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade has not regained the 1992 numbers, so these are the constraints.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell the House that the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade work well beyond the call of duty on a daily basis. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is a 24-hours Ministry. On Saturdays and on Sundays, day and night, you will find young dedicated people at work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is not a Ministry that can close on Friday afternoon and reopen on Monday morning.

Mr. Chairman, at a time when it seems that every day is a time when there is a crisis breaking here, there and everywhere, client Ministries call upon the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade at a moment's notice. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is a ministry whose job is to be keeping its ear to the ground and to the air sniffing out when the strategic interest of Barbados is threatened in anyway and then very quickly putting the facts as we gather them, or as our intelligence brings them to our attention, to the Government through one or the other of its diverse agencies.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

The exact figure is actually 1.73 per cent of the total. It is just a little over 68 per cent of the budget that we give to the operations of our overseas Missions.

Mr. Speaker, I say this every year but I have to say it. The past year has been a most difficult and challenging one for the international community. In 2001, it was September 11th. Exactly a year ago while we were debating the Estimates in this Chamber, Honourable Members would recall that the United States of America and its allies began their military intervention in Iraq, and Barbados' position on that intervention was taken on this Floor by the Right Honourable Prime Minister and I. Today, as we are now debating this Head, we are confronted by the most unspeakable carnage in Madrid and closer to home, renewed trauma and political upheaval in Haiti.

Mr. Speaker, I well recall throwing out a rhetorical question when I made my intervention on this Floor on the question of the intervention of Iraq. The late Right Excellent Sir Grantley Adams used to

say that in politics you should not ask rhetorical questions because you cannot be sure what answer you might get, nevertheless I asked the rhetorical question, who is next for a regime change.

I spoke to this region. I asked, will it be Haiti or will it be Venezuela. I said those words not at all meaning to be prophetic and not at all imagining for one moment that I was prescient, but that is where we are at today.

Mr. Chairman, it is abundantly clear that the issue of peace and security will continue to dominate the international agenda and we have to be engaged. A year ago Barbadians may have thought that Iraq was a long way off, but today Haiti is a member of CARICOM.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

You may break off diplomatic relations, but you do not disengage in that way. That is one of the lessons that needs to be learnt in this community.

Mr. Chairman, these are among the very serious challenges which face us. The foreign policy challenge is not only confined to global political issues. There is a lot of uncertainty and insecurity which is having a very profound effect. I spoke to some of it yesterday in respect of international economic and trade issues, and I hope that we would speak more to these in this debate. We have a stalling of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) process. The DOHA Development Round, as it is called, is still in a stalled situation. Meetings are underway. People are talking to each other in regions, between regions, and among regions. In the Free Trade Area of the Americas, as I said yesterday, we are hoping that the meeting which fell apart in Mexico in January would be resumed at the end of April and that the Free Trade Area of the Americas process will find compromises which would allow it to move forward.

Mr. Chairman, the business of defending the strategic interest of Barbados in this region, in this hemisphere and in the international community is one that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, never mind its minuscule budgetary allocation, will continue to take a position based on principles, on traditions of democratic governance, on social justice and with respect to the rule of law on which our parliamentary democracy is based, and for which Barbados is respected everywhere in the world.

We are a small state, but we will continue to support multilateralism. It has to be said in here again. It was the burden of my intervention a year ago in the Estimates debate when we were speaking in relation to the intervention by the United States of America into Iraq which was a unilateral intervention.

Mr. Chairman, I said at the United Nations last year - I will say it again because it is topical and countries need to be prepared to stand up for their principles - Barbados will continue to support multilateralism the only way we see it as building a truly global consensus on responses to the most pressing issues that are confronting us. It does not matter whether it is to do with peace and security, whether it is in the exclusively diplomatic international sense, or whether it is in respect of economic and/or indeed social development.

Mr. Chairman, we have found that there are occasions when in Barbados we take these positions, in the context of CARICOM, sometimes bilaterally. When we take these positions based on very firm principles which the people of Barbados are very well acquainted with and would not expect us to take otherwise, sometimes we are finding ourselves at variance with our friends, our allies and our bilateral partners.

House 25 Sequence 126

2:50 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Speaker, I say again, as I have said last year, that sometimes there are issues on which we are going to have to agree to disagree, and that we hope now, as we had hoped then, that when those occasions arise, we could be frank with each other as friends or as allies, whether within this region or outside and that mutual respect would still be the order of the day.

It is also hoped that we would not give way to harsh words and to rancour but that we would use positive diplomacy and dialogue to build understanding on all sides, and that we would try to minimise the effects of our differences, both in the immediate and in the longer terms.

Mr. Speaker, that is important too when bearing in mind the recent impasse between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. It does not mean that because we have disagreed in one sphere of operation that we are not speaking to each other. Sir, even when the impasse between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago was raging at its height, I was on a mission in Central America, at the behest of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

This mission was paid for by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and I was accompanied by an Ambassador and other staff, seeking to put the case for Trinidad and Tobago as the headquarters for the coming Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Sir, how many people were to know that even when it was raging at its height, one Thursday afternoon after Cabinet, Prime Minister Manning of Trinidad and Tobago telephoned Prime Minister Arthur of Barbados to say that there was a crisis now breaking in Haiti and that they both had to talk. Sir, within 48 hours, both Heads, together with others, were meeting in Jamaica to address these problems.

Sir, how many people are aware that during the luncheon interval, the Honourable Attorney-General and the Honourable Member for St. James Central are both now in the Committee Room, meeting in respect of matters which the Attorney-General will next week be arguing before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker, in that connection, the Attorney-General of Barbados is working hand-in-glove with the Attorney-General of Trinidad and Tobago and particularly where there is such anger and disaffection.

Sir, in the case of Haiti, the history of Haiti is replete with such anger and disaffection but it is not something that we in Barbados or in the English-speaking Caribbean understand, that in 200 years of Independence, as the first black Republic in this Hemisphere, there have been 33 coups d'état. I cannot remember how many Presidents have been assassinated, but it is a culture that is alien to our way of doing things.

Mr. Speaker, in all of this turbulence in our region and wider afield in the international community, particularly now speaking to the effort to combat terrorism, as the Right Honourable Prime Minister likes to put it, we may not be a part of the problem, but it is expected that we will be part of the solution.

Therefore, in this regard, I have to say that Barbados will continue to comply fully with the Security Council's mandate and that in a much terrorised world, we will take all necessary steps, in order to keep Barbados safe and guard against the use of our territory, our financial institutions, or any of our citizens, for the financing or perpetration of acts of terrorism. That is important. Terrorism is everywhere and we must not feel that we are immune to it.

Mr. Speaker, in this region, we will continue to show leadership in our efforts to deepen the integration movement. The fact that Barbados has Prime Ministerial responsibility for the establishment and leadership of the Single Market and Single Economy, is also very topical and we will continue to play our role and help to create conditions for the full implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that it is not overtaken and that we would find ourselves unready. It is a precursor, so to speak, to the Free Trade Area of the Americas and eventually to what will happen in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as soon as we get the DOHA Round started, which I do believe will be restarted and that we will be able to get a trade round going.

Sir, it is important that the Caribbean Single Market and Economy would be the vehicle that would allow us to access better and to participate better in these bilaterals that we are doing, and we have done a number of them.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know that people are aware that there is a CARICOM/Venezuela, a CARICOM/Columbia, a CARICOM/Dominican Republic, a CARICOM/Cuba. We are hoping that very soon we will have a CARICOM/Costa Rica. There is CAB/CAN but all of the regions in which we are engaging, it is important that the CARICOM Single Market and Economy is the vehicle by which we would access these but, ultimately, the multilateral trading system is what we believe is in our best interest.

Mr. Chairman, there are certain priorities in this coming financial year which I would wish to draw to the attention of this Honourable House. I think the Honourable House may be aware that the Chairmanship of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations within CARICOM, (COFCOR) is coming to Barbados in mid April and Barbados will come to the Chair. This would mean that, from time to time, during the year of our Chairmanship, we might be called upon to play a leadership role in the coordination of the region's foreign policies.

Mr. Speaker, this is happening at a very critical juncture in our history and again we are depending on a very narrow human resource base. This is going to depend very much on hard work coming from them because, at the same time, they are serving as overall coordinator of the region's negotiation strategy in all the three theatres of negotiations, which is going to throw a greater load on me as Chief Coordinator but also on the Barbados Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Therefore, servicing these two responsibilities is going to be the major priority for the Ministry in 2004 to 2005.

Mr. Speaker, in the foreign affairs sphere of influence, I feel it my duty to say to this Honourable House a few words in respect to the situation in Haiti. This is now a very immediate preoccupation for us. I think it must be generally known that the CARICOM Heads, as they do every year, will meet in Inter-sessional Meetings in St. Kitts on March 25 and 26, 2004, and high on their agenda will be the question of Haiti, a very important matter to be decided. The situation in Haiti is volatile.

H:No. 25 (127)300 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

The picture is changing every day and sometimes in ways that we have not expected and that we are only made aware of after the fact.

Sir, Honourable Members would know that CARICOM Heads met in, Kingston, Jamaica on March 2nd and 3rd in an emergency session and a number of concerns were voiced by them. One concern was the failure of the international community to act in better time than it did to stabilise the deteriorating situation in Haiti and to try harder than it did to preserve constitutionality and, perhaps, to have given greater priority to the CARICOM Prior Action Plan.

The Heads are very disturbed about the unclear circumstances and continue to the concerns of Mr. Aristide's departure and the precedent that it may have set in respect of the removal of a constitutionally elected President. In CARICOM, certainly we can speak very loudly for Barbados on both sides of the House and there cannot be any divide on this. There is no way that we would want the removal of a constitutionally elected Head of State and/or Government by unconstitutional means. At the same time, CARICOM wants to be very careful about how and where it gives legitimacy to any unlawful or irregular force which seeks to constitute itself as a government. Sir, these matters are going to be discussed very closely by the CARICOM Heads when they meet next week.

Mr. Chairman, the reality is that CARICOM wants to remain engaged in a positive way for the sake of the Haitian people who are part of the Caribbean and, as we have in the past, we would not want to be part of any task force that would be engaged in the business of seeking to raise in Haiti, institutions which we take for granted in the English-speaking Caribbean which underpin a democracy.

Sir, I maintain always that part of the reason why we have been getting it wrong about Haiti for so long is because we move from the wrong premise. Sir, we think that we should be helping to restore a democracy in Haiti, when in 200 years they have not had a democracy, certainly, not of the kind that we

are accustomed to.

I think we have to be very careful to understand that in Haiti, and other places in the world too, where there are similar problems that in the 21st Century, we cannot imagine that in a short space of time that the kind of democracy which has taken years and centuries to build in our countries can be put in place. Sir, new and differing kinds of democracies will evolve, even as our own democracy is still evolving.

Sir, this was the burden of discussion earlier today, the styles of governance and the way in which we do our financial business in Barbados is a movable piece and you go on improving. Mr. Chairman, all of the Victorian and antiquated elements need now to give way to new and modern ways of doing business and in this Parliament as well. Sir, parliamentary reform is long overdue and I am hoping that could be a way, in due course, in which Barbados, as part of a United Nations designated task force could help the people of Haiti.

Sir, recent developments are very concerning and I think I have to say that the movement of Mr. Aristide from the Central African Republic back to Jamaica in this region was not the subject of a CARICOM initiative. I, as Foreign Minister of Barbados, was informed by the Foreign Minister of Jamaica after the fact. This is a matter between the Government of Jamaica and Mr. Aristide but, clearly, there are implications for us and in no way could I dream of preempting what the Heads might conclude when they meet in St. Kitts next week.

However, we will continue to do whatever we can to help to build these democratic structures, processes and institutions whenever the time is right and we are invited to do so.

Mr. Chairman, I regret that the half hour has gone so quickly. I wanted to come to some of the trade matters, particularly those relating to the special interest of small economies like ours but when I rise again, I will speak to those issues.

I am very much obliged to you, Sir.

I beg to move that Head 32 stand part.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Mr. Chairman, I am not going to be long because I believe the Honourable Member wants to finish her presentation and I would not want to preempt some of the important issues she has raised.

Sir, for our part in the Democratic Labour Party, we have always had a very consistent and strong position about intervention in other countries. I refer now particularly to the issue of Haiti. In fact, in the 1980s, there was a divide in this Parliament on the issue of Grenada. At that time, the Leader of the Democratic Labour Party and its founder took an exceedingly strong position against the intervention in Grenada and that particular perspective has always been part of the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, something has already happened in Haiti and to the extent that the Honourable Member for the City said that we may not be part of the problem, but that we may have to be part of the solution, I would like to know what specific proposals are being considered, whether in the region or by way of

individual territories, because of the instability which feeds itself in the region.

I know that people are extremely worried by Haiti's presence in CARICOM even before the instability. There are a lot of issues that Haiti's presence in CARICOM raises like those of public health and the question of freedom of movement because of the state of its economy. There are a lot of issues that leaders in the region privately raised as concerns about Haiti's presence.

H25/15:10

Sequence 128

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

I also get the impression that there seems to be a disconnect, a lack of involvement by Haiti or vice versa. In other words, it seems as though while what was happening in Haiti, in terms of the knowledge of CARICOM's involvement, it seems extremely limited. That is the impression that was given. Perhaps, Barbados was caught up at that time with the fishing dispute with Trinidad.

I am not talking about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am talking about Barbadians or public perception, so that what was happening in Haiti was lost on us but the international media picked it up and actually provided more information about what was happening in Haiti than our own regional media.

Sir, we seem to have no contacts or information of the situation there. There is a great gap in our knowledge and also because of reliance on international media, the perspective that many people have in the Caribbean of what has been happening in Haiti, it is often tainted by the bias which is reflected in the news reports that come from outside of our region.

Sir, the question is, what is the next step? That is something that needs some debate and discussion. I am also interested in what is happening with the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. We must be frank that while it is true that you may have particular disputes within the Caribbean region between two territories, that may not affect the way officials relate to each other, it is clear that there has been some demonstration effect from the dispute between Barbados and Trinidad in relation to the question of our territorial boundaries and the arrest of the Barbadian fishermen.

The Government seems to be very weird in its perspective on this. At one point one got the impression that it was taking steps to safeguard Barbados and taking steps which would enhance Barbados' bargaining position in the process, then in the middle of the dispute we were hearing that the imposition of licences was not an act directed at Trinidad, but had CARICOM implications.

On the one hand there was a big press conference a Saturday morning and we got the impression that the Government was dealing with the Trinidad situation, only to be told a few months later that it was

not so. Of course, the press in Trinidad may have it all wrong.

Sir, there was one report which described the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown which said, "He said," meaning the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Then there was one which described the Honourable Member for St. James Central, "She said," meaning the Minister.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

At the end of the day, in the heat of the moment it seems as though many people in the region did not understand what the entire dispute was about and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Barbados, except for a few interventions, seemed to have surrendered the disputes or the mechanics of it to what essentially relates to legal issues rather than an issue of foreign relations.

I always thought that foreign policy was an extension of your domestic policy. I said on countless occasions in here that it cannot fall from the mouth of Barbados to go out into international fora giving the impression that we are the champions of free and fair trade when in Barbados we do not practise free and fair trade. Sir, that is another issue I think the Minister of Foreign Affairs needs to come to grips with because I believe that the credibility of our message is significantly compromised.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

In the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown resides all knowledge. She has the appropriate accent and the appropriate disposition to tell people that they know nothing and have no credibility on issues of foreign affairs.

Sir, everything started in 1994. There was no foreign affairs in 1994. According to the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, we shut down the entire Ministry so everything the Honourable Member for St. George South did we would only hear about when he passes away and I am not looking forward to that day. Nobody is going to say now that here was something that was happening in Barbados' Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the 1960s or 1970s. It was all created in 1994 and what we have as foreign affairs bears only the imprimatur of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Sir, I am not accepting that. Foreign Affairs is like any other area of national development. We need to debate and discuss it and people are entitled to hold different views. Sir, because you hold a different view does not mean that you are unpatriotic.

Mr. Speaker, the very Barbados Labour Party that we are sitting and looking at in this debate, in 1994 when a CARICOM Heads of Government was supposed to be convened here, joined with other countries in the Caribbean, particularly the present Prime Minister of Antigua, in recommending that it be rescheduled or held in another country. People forget that. It was an unpatriotic act but it happened.

Asides

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Sir, because the then Prime Minister had suffered a vote of no-confidence, it was being recommended that the Heads of Government should not be held in Barbados at that time. It was an unpatriotic act. It is quite true and the record is very clear on it.

Mr. Speaker, there was an attempt by other leaders in the region to put pressure on Barbados not to hold the meeting, but we can have a fishing dispute in Barbados and discuss a different perspective in seeking to try and resolve it and it can fall from the mouths of Honourable Members on That Side that you are being unpatriotic, simply because you recommend other alternative dispute mechanisms and because you think that within the context of CARICOM there must be a better way to solve disputes and issues which come about. If not, none of the statements of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, the efficacy of the Caribbean Court of Justice or the relevance of the nine Protocols will have any meaning unless there is a process in which you can resolve issues.

Internally and domestically, as citizens of Barbados, we do not have to swallow hook, line and sinker what the Government tells us on any issue. We are entitled, whether it is through the University of the West Indies, within political parties, on the streets or Call-in programmes to discuss whether the solutions that are being exercised are worthwhile. I do not think that Barbados has yet exhausted all of the expertise that it has available to it.

Mr. Speaker, we have three former leaders of political parties, all Knighted and who have good standing within the region. We have former Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Leader of Opposition and a former leader of a third party, a distinguished and eminent doctor. Put them together and let them work on solving the issues. Leave the cantankerous one out of the debate and let people who are interested in solutions lead the effort to try and solve issues of this sort.

Mr. Speaker, no matter what the Minister said that we may be talking to Trinidad officials on other issues, there is a general feeling that the relationship between Trinidad and Barbados outside of that fishing dispute is not in good shape. Persons who went to Trinidad for Carnival will tell you about it. Those who go to Trinidad for cricket this weekend, on their return would tell you about it. Businessmen and itinerant traders are talking about it.

H25: 15.20

Sequence 129

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

Maybe the Barbados Government is waiting for information from some intelligence unit somewhere in the world to tell us the state of our foreign relations rather than reacting to the gut instincts and feelings of the people who on a daily basis have to be involved in working in the region.

It is going to impact on how our professionals go about their business. It is going to impact on how much public support you are going to get for the Freedom of Movement Bill which, I believe, is on the Order Paper because the Government is not going to be able to generate sufficient public support to pilot a bill in those circumstances.

These are things I believe the Government needs to speak about in relation to its foreign policy and not carry us down the garden path into esoteric and lofty statements of intent. They should get to the practical issues because, as I always understood it, foreign policy is an extension of your domestic policy.

In that regard, if your domestic policy or your perspective domestically is wrong, then your foreign policy will set off on the wrong footing, so I assumed there would be answers to these questions that would help to enlighten the dark corners of my mind about the direction of foreign policy in Barbados at this time.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Mr. Chairman, I do not think that this really bears much debate. As far back as the 1960s the mantra, foreign policy being an extension of domestic policy, the Honourable Member for St. John ended his intervention on was being bandied about. It only lost its relevance toward the latter part of that decade. Subsequent to that time it really had not found currency other than perhaps in more recent times from the mouth of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South-Central who is not now in his seat, and it has been voiced a few minutes ago in the House.

Sir, if you understood the point that we are dealing with a more cooperative type of Caribbean which has committed itself to a rules-based process and which is now submitting itself to an element of compulsion in terms of that cooperative process, you would understand that those things which we consider to be foreign policy really and truly are helping to shape the regional endeavour.

This is, perhaps, most easily understood if you recognise the economic point that the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States for argument sake are the only countries on this planet with whom we have a comparative trading advantage, so that when we are talking about a foreign policy in CARICOM, it is not just an extension simplistically put of a domestic policy, but has to be a foreign policy aimed at shaping and building a region which serves the interest of Barbados. A foreign policy has since the 1960s taken on an entire different dimension. It is perhaps regrettable that the Honourable Member for St. John ended on that note.

Sir, I want to speak very briefly to the question of the apparent misunderstanding of the fisheries dispute because I think that it is an important point that he made. I had the opportunity a few weeks ago to sit with a journalist from TV6 from Trinidad and Tobago and I think that a lot of the emotionally charged atmosphere superseded the substance of that which took place between our two countries during a very prolonged period of negotiation.

Sir, without in any way wanting to reflect negatively, because at all stages I think we can agree that Government has tried to rise about partisanship in this matter, the foreign policy error, failing or sin of omission took place in 1990\1991 when the disputed treaty was signed between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. At that time the Government of the day had a High Commissioner on the ground in

Trinidad and Tobago.

The records reveal that there was never any reservation entered into on the part of the Barbados High Commissioner on behalf of Barbados even though at that time the Leader of the Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago as he then was who is now the Prime Minister today made it public that there were reservations in his mind about the effect that Treaty would have on not only Barbados' maritime space but on Trinidad and Tobago maritime space, on Guyana's maritime space and on Guyana's land mass to the extent of a third of that country's territorial space. That point was made clear in 1991 by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago today, the Leader of the Opposition as he then was. If a failing took place, it was the fact that the Government of Barbados of that day of which the Honourable Member for St. John, who has again fled, was a Cabinet Minister and nothing was said to emphasise the reservations that Barbados had.

Sir, I have to go further. We must not believe that this exercise of foreign policy simply means that you can invite a head or some department leader to come and sit down in Glenburnie and enjoy a bowl of soup and that would be the be-all and end-all of the thing. What we are talking about transcends all of that.

We are talking not only about something of significant, fundamental, economic and national interest to Barbados, we are talking about a maritime boundary delimitation. There is no agreement that two heads can come to that can take the effect of a definite demarcation in international law.

Sir, what Barbados did since 1994 was to begin a process of getting the British Hierography Office to come down here. They mapped out the base points from Trinidad and Tobago. They mapped out the base points from Barbados. You plotted the layer of the ocean floor. You satisfy yourself that there was nothing in-between the two territories which could in any way suggest that there was another land mass so as to affect the measurements. We knew by 1998 by way of record from the Hierography Office exactly what the nature of the relationship was between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago in terms of the maritime space. That was a project which was undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John should know better. I hate to refer to it in this way but he is in a state of benighted ignorance. He was invited to lift himself out of that state and he declined so to do by not coming and participating in the information which was shared fully with all Honourable Members of the House.

Mr. Chairman, if we are going to say that people did not understand the nature of the difficulty that we were having we also have not recognised that a lot of this has been ventilated by the Government of Barbados. We have not however been the beneficiary of knowledge to this day of the precise answers to some of the questions that we have by diplomatic note put to Trinidad and Tobago.

We know for argument's sake that there is information to the effect that an agreement was reached between Trinidad and Tobago wherein they would begin to mutually exploit along the disputed line mineral deposits to be found on the ocean floor, but when we asked for the particulars of that Agreement, we have not yet got it. We know that there was a proposal by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to award as many as ten blocks for the purposes of satisfying a bid so that you can

begin the process of mineral extraction. We have requested the location of the 10 blocks but we have not been told where they are.

House 25 Sequence 130

3:20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Our intelligence has indicated that in all likelihood, it is at least three of those blocks might actually lie within the disputed territory, that disputed area between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago but confirmation of the same has not come from Trinidad and Tobago.

Therefore, when the Honourable Member for St. John continues to make a point about people not knowing and people misunderstanding, et cetera, there is only so much that the Government of Barbados could do because there is only so much information that we have.

Sir, above and beyond that, it is also correct to say that the Government of Barbados has gone further than the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of taking members of the community into their confidence, in terms of bringing leaders of the governmental departments, the Permanent Secretaries, the fisherfolk, the Opposition, the Immigration, the key members of the Press, where everybody with a relevant interest in this matter was briefed by the Government of Barbados.

It therefore, should not lie in the mouth of the Honourable Member for St. John, if he wanted to be fair in this matter, to be saying that there was a failing on the part of Government or a misrepresentation of its efforts.

Sir, insofar as the issues the Honourable Member has raised with regard to whether or not people misappreciate what is going on and feel that we have a problem with Trinidad and Tobago which transcends that, I want to say that I was too young to have known the failure of the Federation, but I understand the stigma that lies in the minds of those who have experienced its failure.

However, I believe that this country and this region are now too inextricably intertwined in its collective efforts such as social and political. We cannot expect that every dispute is going to lead to automatic failure. We cannot continue walking about with a mindset of negativity which says that because countries have a disagreement, it means insolvable disputes, and that it is a recipe for disaster because there is an expression that is contrary to that which you hold.

Sir, a few weeks ago, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown came back from an extensive exercise in Central America, at the expense of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, trying to help lobby for that country to be the Headquarters of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Therefore, it is not an issue of the two countries permanently falling out. Even as I speak, the Attorney-General is not in her seat, but is preparing to leave tomorrow, to join the Attorney-General of Trinidad and Tobago,

in a matter which is being heard before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, it cannot be said that cooperation between the two countries is lacking or is in any way broken down because there are a number of ventures. Barbados has gone out on a limb, incurred perhaps by the displeasure of certain persons imminently placed in the United States of America because of our commitment to the International Criminal Court. The International Criminal Court is a concept of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sir, the question of licensing and the licensing regime, as I tried explaining last night, is rooted in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. Under Article 92, we have a right to make a request to the CARICOM body, to say that we believe that certain imports into Barbados threaten competing productive sectors. We believe that those imports are so threatening that we should be able to implement safeguard mechanisms. I have said this last night. I have said this ab nauseam. I have said it in cathedra and ex cathedra.

Mr. Chairman, the only way that we can make a case to COTED and to CARICOM on the basis of whether or not certain goods which are listed and enumerated in a schedule put out by the Ministry of Commerce, are threatened, is when we are able to produce the evidence. Sir, the evidence is not drawn from thin air. It has to come from an accumulation of data and evidence.

There are two ways by which we are going to get that evidence, first through the Customs and Excise Department, which is a very long and tedious process and secondly, through the monitoring licensing regime. I have made the point that the monitoring licensing regime is fully accepted under the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) rules on licensing. They call it an automatic licence and it has, out of necessity, to be transparent, which it is. Anybody who applies for a licence, gets it. Anybody who applies for the licence, gets it within two or three days, sometimes less. There are importers to Barbados who ask for the licence in advance, knowing that they are going to bring the goods in two or three months later.

Mr. Chairman, there is no question of anything being improper, disputatious or confrontational about the introduction of the licensing regime. What we did was entirely in keeping with the request of the Leader of the Opposition, which is to put ourselves in a position where we would know exactly what the position was with certain things such as agricultural and manufacturing products, and how best we could take steps to protect those industries and turn them around, or whether or not the issue might actually be a threat other than from competition. That is the story behind the licensing mechanism. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, I too rise to take part in this debate and to say from the outset that one has to recognise that the foreign policy of any country is the most important policy outside of Barbados, and that whatever we do and say outside of Barbados, must be said in such a way that it adds to the upliftment of Barbados and would not degrade Barbados in anyway.

Mr. Chairman, we also have to recognise that we cannot operate in this world, especially being a small country, and behave as if we have to accept everything that is offered to us. We have to be very careful because if we operate as if we are repeaters of information for other countries, we would find ourselves

not progressing in the international world.

I also want to say that after sorting out one's foreign policy at home, the next best place for testing one's foreign policy is within the Caribbean region. If we cannot get it right within the CARICOM region, it is going to be very difficult for us to get it right in the extra regional regions.

Sir, one must understand that it is a give-and-take situation. I have heard much about the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados in the early 1990s and how a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the 1990s, and that the Democratic Labour Party did not know that it was signed in the 1990s.

Sir, it is rather interesting because one has gotten the impression that this was only known a number of months ago. Mr. Chairman, let us accept that might be true, which means that between 1990 to 1994, the Democratic Labour Party would have failed for four years and that the Barbados Labour Party would have been failing since 1994 to now, and up to the time they recognised that point.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

On a point of order. I am not sure that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy understands what he is saying or knows that he is misleading the Honourable House, but he certainly is misleading the Honourable House.

Mr. Chairman, at no stage has it ever been suggested that the signature of the Treaty of Chaguaramas was not known to Barbados until a few months ago. At no stage has that either fallen from my lips, and I am most certain that I have never heard it being said by Honourable Members on This Side. The Treaty of Chaguaramas being signed was the knowledge of the Barbados Government from the time it was signed and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy might have well come to grips with that.

H:No. 25 (131)330 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, I heard openly on the radio station of Barbados that it was signed and that we in the Democratic Labour Party did not know about it. Sir, if it is true, that is okay, but for it to become an issue in the year 2004 tells me that they should have taken action on the issue then and not wait until now to deal with the matter because it was important to the people of Barbados. Sir, if we have failed for four years, they would have failed for a longer period of time.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS:

Sir, perhaps the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was asleep. I went through the process of explaining that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1995 has been taking steps in relation to this matter in order to position Barbados to adequately deal with the same matter and I do not see what is so difficult to understand about it.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, I am telling this House and Barbados that this only became an issue of importance as

soon as drilling was done and oil reserves were found that we suddenly raised the red flag and understood the importance of the MOU. To protect our interest, we came to Parliament last year just before Elections to deal with the delimitation marks.

Sir, there was a supplementary in Parliament that warned the Opposition about the finding of oil.

Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. These are important matters and there are no points to be scored. It is widely known what happened in 1991/92 and I have spoken about it on this Floor in the past. There was a fishing agreement that was not worth the paper it was written on, and from the time we came back into Government we have been working on the issue. Sir, they cannot force a Government to forge a treaty with them if they are not disposed to do it.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, I accept the point from the Honourable Member for the City. That is why the red herring cannot be used that the Democratic Labour Party could have done something about it and did not because the same way the Barbados Labour Party has been dealing with it since 1995 and has not been able to correct it, one can come to the conclusion that the Democratic Labour Party would have been faced with the same problem.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. In 1991/92, an agreement was forged for one year and I spoke to the tonnage that Barbadian boats would have had to leave behind in Trinidad even before they brought one fish to Barbados. I also spoke about the number of boats which would be allowed in and about the time-frame. Everyone knows that the fishing season is from November to April and that there is no point in telling us we can fish outside of the fishing season because it is no use to us.

Sir, I heard this morning that flying fish is \$25 for 100 and this is because the fishing is running off Barbados now. Sir, the Democratic Labour Party forged a fishing agreement that was not worth the paper it was written on. The Barbadian fisherfolk could not make use of it because it was no use to them economically speaking. That is the reality.

Sir, we do not want to forge another empty paper agreement which is not going to answer the needs of the Barbadian fisherfolk. This is why it was not renewed because the fisherfolk was not interested in renewing something they could not use.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, the present Prime Minister of Trinidad was the one to alert the Caribbean region about the Agreement and all over the radio station it was said that the Democratic Labour Party knew nothing about it and it was also said in here today about the MOU. Since 1995, the Barbados Labour Party knew of it and were not able to change it, but they wanted the Democratic Labour Party to change it in four years, although they had more time to deal with it.

Mr. Chairman, the Fishing Agreement was used as a red herring in this Parliament and all over Barbados. Sir, let us be realistic about this issue and stop using the fishing agreement as a red herring and recognise that if we had signed an agreement in the 90s so that they could fish in the Tobagonian

waters without paying a fee, we would now be in trouble. I want to praise the people who signed the Agreement because the Trinidadians could now argue that since they gave us the right to fish in their waters that they must have a right to source our oil.

We have to understand that oil has a greater value than fishing. The MOU agreement that you speak of now that should have been signed, it is good that we tied it to something and did not give us our liberty.

Sir, the important thing is that the Democratic Labour Party did not sell Barbados out in that fishing accord. For many years prior to 1994 the impression was being given to the fishermen of Barbados that the Democratic Labour Party failed in signing a fishing agreement in their interest. Sir, if we had signed that Fishing Agreement for a long period of time, we would have tied Barbados' oil reserves to Trinidad.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to see them backtracking on what they said previously and that they now understand the issue. One thing I can say is that Barbados always had a good relationship with Trinidad and the Democratic Labour Party cannot be blamed if the relationship has fallen afoul.

The Democratic Labour Party did a lot of work to build the relationship within the CARICOM region and we should be proud of it. The relationship has now gone under and they should not continue to blame us for the faults of the Barbados Labour Party. Everything that goes wrong, they blame the Democratic Labour Party for during the early 90s.

Sir, I am saying that we should not be on war about foreign affairs and the Barbados Labour Party should understand that as the Government, they have to hold the Opposition in their confidence and stop criticising them when they should be asking them to join hands with them to fight outside forces. I have said openly on the Call-in programmes that I back the Government of Barbados on this issue but it must be prepared to stop using political ploys to try to destroy the Democratic Labour Party and then expect them to support it.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I am not going to allow anyone to mis-wit the Democratic Labour Party and get 10 turns in this Parliament. We will make sure there are no 10 terms in here so you would not be able to mis-wit the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Chairman, the foreign policy of the Barbados Government must be one that we can use CARICOM the same way it was used when there was a problem in Grenada. It is interesting that the Barbados Labour Party bragged about how they were able to call the Americans and other forces to Grenada but I have not heard a word from them on the situation in Haiti.

H25/15:50

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

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

What is so different about Haiti?

Sir, let me state upfront that I am a supporter of the American policy even though I might not support the present President.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I do not have to deny that. Everybody knows where I stand and I declare my hand. I do not hide and state a position.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I am saying that we have to understand that our Ministry of Foreign Affairs should have given us the information on Haiti the same way our Ambassador to Trinidad gave us the information on the Memorandum of Understanding with Trinidad.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

On a point of order. We really need to be very careful about what we are saying in here. I know nothing about any information about an invasion of Haiti. Let us be very careful because this is a very volatile situation. This is a matter which the Heads of Government are going to deal with but please, do not let responsible Members of Parliament give the Caribbean public to understand that the Barbados Parliament is discussing anything to do with any invasion of Haiti. I know nothing of it.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, what is interesting about that is that the Ministries and the High Commissioners are supposed to be the intelligence gathering agencies on the ground for the Democratic Labour Party when they are in Government, but when the Barbados Labour Party is in Government, apparently, it is not supposed to work the same way. I am saying that if a Memorandum of Understanding is important, surely, an intervention has to be more important.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS:

On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is again misleading the House and himself. There has never been a suggestion that the gentleman to whom I referred, the former High Commissioner, Mr. DaSilva, was supposed to have been doing any information or intelligence gathering. If you know the gentleman, you would know that you could not accuse him of having anything to with intelligence or gathering of that.

Sir, the fact of the matter is that a publicly known exercise was conducted. That exercise was the signing of a Treaty between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. As a consequence of the signing of

that Treaty, it was said that the High Commissioner should have been in a position to report to Barbados the fact that this has been done and should have been in a position to ...

Asides.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS:

The Honourable Member has to understand that once the Treaty had been signed, the gentleman on the ground in Trinidad and Tobago, assuming that the Government of the day had an interest in entering a reservation and they have never said that they had an interest in entering a reservation...

The only thing that I heard from our new spokesman for that Government of the day was that the matter could be solved with Cou Cou. A reservation could have been entered in Trinidad through the gentleman. Sir, that is all that I am saying.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The point has been taken. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, with your interruptions, you have three minutes more.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Sir, this is a Supplementary and I can come back if I want to. I am quite aware of that, Sir.

Sir, what is interesting is that I agree with the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown that we must ask who is next. Seeing that we have to ask who is next, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs must provide some vital information for us. When things like these are happening in the Caribbean, we should know.

I must make sure that if I want to be a member of a Government, nobody would put me to be a minister at the expense of the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown using those tactics. I believe in winning a Government fairly and that is why the Democratic Labour Party must get the intelligence so that we can help protect the Government.

Sir, it was not me who introduced that point but since the point was introduced, I can only strengthen it and agree with the Government on this particular issue.

I am saying that the same way in 1990 that we were expected to have this information, even though I did not play any key role in it, I would defend the part on these issues. I was not scared of the Democratic Labour Party in the early 1990s. I am taking it upon myself to defend the Party because I have always figured that it was a rich period and people, who did not understand it, could not see it.

Sir, that is why I wrote and openly gave my support to the Party on that particular period. Sir, that is why I would defend the foreign policy during that period and that is why when the Government went on the air and accused the Democratic Labour Party of not knowing about the 1990s...

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I have never denied that the Democratic Labour Party was part of privatisation. I would be a liar to defend the Democratic Labour Party and say that they were never part of privatisation. What am I to defend? The Democratic Labour Party's policy in privatisation is that you sell to build and the Prime Minister has admitted that Government seems to be the one who has to lead in terms of development. In order to do that you will sell your assets, pass on and build capacity. That is what you call building capacity.

Sir, thank you but I will come back if I have to do so.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS:

Sir, just to, perhaps, clarify some of the difficulties that are being faced by some of the Honourable Members on the Other Side. It is a fact that there was an agreement in 1990 between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. That Agreement, as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown quite rightly said, perhaps, was not worth the paper it was written on. Why do we say that? It allowed for a total of 40 Barbadian vessels to be carrying the fish between Barbados and Trinidad.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John flees when he is put on the defensive. In addition, there was an access fee which was as much as US\$800 per boat per season and a total of five Barbadian fishing boats took up the agreement.

Sir, that is what was offered then. I want to make the point that negotiations recommenced after the work of the hydrology office had been completed. It is untrue and unfair to put abroad this foolishness that it only started after somebody began drilling. To the best of my knowledge, the only drilling that was done off the coast of Barbados was by Conoco, and that was in 2002.

Sir, there were four fishing negotiations, five maritime boundaries negotiation series and at all stages, Barbados had maintained that one is as inextricably linked to the other. There was no difference from Barbados' perspective between the negotiation and fisheries and maritime boundaries delimitation, and we have maintained that.

Mr. Chairman, more recently, coming out of those negotiations, which were led by the late Sir Harold St. John, there had been no improvement on Trinidad's part, and that is what we are saying. They reached a point where Trinidad said that they would offer 60 boats but, in reality, that which they were offering was really less in terms of access than the 40 boats in 1990.

They were saying that you would get 60 boats but you would only be able to have 10 boats being used in any given month. Yet, the licencing was going to be increased to US\$1,000 per boat per season. Mr. Chairman, we were getting what could only be called a raw deal.

Sir, more important than that, there was no commitment to the question of maritime boundaries. What we are saying is that this issue goes beyond just an exchange of an agreement between parties on the question of access to flying fish. It also involves a larger national interest and because the seabed is rich in resources.

H25 :

16.00 p.m.

Sequence 133

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS:

Sir, since 1998, the St. Vincent Government has requested that Barbados join it in delimiting a boundary. Guyana wants one delimited with their neighbours. The whole archipelago must ultimately be delimited. It does not make sense of us making a political issue out of something as fundamental as this.

If I could help to try to give the gentleman guidance, the fact of the matter is that if we are to ever reach the stage where we run a natural gas pipeline throughout the Caribbean to access energy, because we cannot talk about building a community unless we have access to the most critical resource, and if you are going to try to do something like that, which I think every Member State of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy is interested in, then the reality is that to make it come to pass, you have to have some idea of where your maritime boundary begins and ends.

All it is, we are trying to determine what is Barbados' backyard and understanding that you have a 12-mile territorial limit but outside of that we are all entitled to a claim of 200 miles of exclusive economic zone but when we are 90 miles apart and 110 miles apart, and so on, then you have to demarcate where it is that your boundaries lie, and that cannot be so difficult.

In 1976 an aeroplane went down off Paynes Bay in St. James and the issue arose as to whose waters the aeroplane went down in. If we are going to be part of a first world society, and if we are going to be developing countries, we cannot be so pauperised and backwards in our thinking and approach that we are not prepared to recognise the importance of the maritime boundary issue. I do not know why it is that we should now have this violence being foisted on the intellects of this House that this thing only came about as a result of political gamesmanship and after somebody drilled a well and so on. We are talking about fundamental issues to this country's development.

The Honourable Member for St. John also spoke about Haiti. Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter does remain that when he asked about whether or not we have a position on an unconstitutionally, and I would have to say, selected Head of Government, the truth of the matter is that it is obviously, as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown said, something that is undesirable but if there is one clear position that Barbados has on Haiti is the need for stability.

There is a need to bring stabilisation to that country which is the oldest black republic on the face of this planet. There is a need to ensure that that country that does not have an ability to produce and distribute its products sufficiently...

It has poorly developed infrastructures; unreliable utilities; outdated medical equipment; weak public

sector institutions; poor management systems in the public sector and the private sector; low labour productivity; inefficient marketing of its industries and the output thereof and in many cases a corrupt public service - and I include there all aspects of the public service. It is the only United Nations designated lesser developed country in this hemisphere.

Sir, they do not even have an Electoral and Boundaries Commission. Our honorary counsel allows us to know that his concept of a free and fair election began at age 42. That is what we are talking about when we are talking about Haiti. The first thing we have to be trying to do is to get countries of like mind to come to an understanding that this is not about Mr. Aristide, Mr. Aristide's successor or the opposition. This is an issue about trying to bring stability to a country which is torn at the seams.

Mr. Chairman, I made reference last night when I began my second reading speech to failed societies. If you want a demarcation of a failed society then, perhaps, it is Haiti. We therefore have as part of this region, because it is part of CARICOM, to be thinking along the lines of how we can construct approaches that would help develop Haiti. That is why I take issue with this thing about foreign policy just being an extension of national policy. That is a backward outdated mode of thinking. Our foreign policy has to be saying Haiti is part of CARICOM. CARICOM is going into a Single Market and Economy so that means that there is a massive market out there that we have to try to develop with a view to ensuring that our goods and services can penetrate and benefit. That is what we have to be thinking along here about Haiti for.

If I could hear from a former Minister of Finance in Barbados a suggestion that says well, I heard the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown speaking about the introduction of an economic partnership agreement with Europe...

Perhaps part of the concept behind that economic partnership agreement with Europe would be to ensure that you build capacity in that country and in that country's fundamental sectors, so that research and development programmes and funding for those programmes can come from the Europeans to this United Nations lesser developed country under a regional economic partnership agreement to help transform that which its businesses do to help them with phyto-sanitary standards. They have an agricultural enterprise but, if they have no proper standards then they would never be able to sell anything into Europe. That is a reality.

Mr. Chairman, there are 600 000, 700 000 or 800 000 West Indians living in Europe who would recognise Haiti as a Caribbean country and may want to relate to its products, but if the product cannot get there, then those living boundaries in the diaspora, because CARICOM does not begin and end with the basin, which represent CARICOM interests and are living markets interested in cultural products, in goods and in services, that the phyto-sanitary benefits, technical assistance to assist Haiti in terms of that sector - that I would like to hear from the Opposition, that that is something that they would want to see as part of the foreign policy, we urge for Haiti.

Mr. Chairman, you do not hear that. You hear it is an extension of local policy which, in my view, is simplistic and silly. You do not hear about the development of firms or human resource development in what is rapidly becoming a private sector driven world. Clearly Haiti has a very backward and underdeveloped human resource product because you cannot have gnomes running about the street with machine guns and so on with no respect for the rule of law and be talking about an advanced human

resource product.

One of the ways in which an economic partnership agreement with Europe should be designed is to ensure that built into it is that developmental construct that will assist us in ensuring that that country, which stands potentially to be a big market for our goods and services, has the benefit of developing its human resource.

I do not hear that coming from the Honourable Member for St. John, a former Minister of the Finance in this country. Perhaps the problem here is that there is a complete misappreciation of that which we are trying to achieve. I do not know how much more time I have on this intervention, Sir, so I would come back.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that the Barbados Labour Party Administration sought to apportion blame to the Democratic Labour Party on this fishing matter by the Attorney-General. I think there is an abundance of evidence to show that was the case. However, let us look beyond to see what is the present state of play for the fisherfolk of Barbados and to what extent they are better off than they were a year ago.

Mr. Chairman, once we start to label and assign blame in the way that is customary by this Administration then you enter into all kinds of difficulties. I think we are all aware that in 1978 there was the creation of an economic zone by the then Administration. In fact, one would have thought that if you can seek to establish what your economic zone is, then you would be in a position to defend that economic zone.

House 25 Sequence 134

4:10 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Therefore, this matter predates 1990 and goes way back to 1978 when the country had sought to establish an economic zone.

Mr. Chairman, therefore, to allocate blame on the part of the Democratic Labour Party was unfortunate because, as we have seen, there are several issues that have emerged out of the discussion. At first, there was concern about fishing. It then developed into a maritime issue and became more complicated. Therefore, the Government side must, in fact, take some of the blame for not engaging the Opposition enough and for them then to seek to apportion blame by suggesting that a failed fishing agreement of the early 1990s was at the heart of the difficulties being experienced in recent times.

Mr. Chairman, it is unfair to try to accuse the Honourable Member for St. John for not giving an opinion on how we should go forward with respect to Haiti. Sometimes the Honourable Member for St.

James Central can become carried away because he well knows that there is an organisation called "CARIFORUM" in which Haiti is a member, along with the Dominion Republic and the rest of the CARICOM territories.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

On a point of order. CARIFORUM was CARICOM, plus the Dominion Republic of Haiti. Haiti has now become a member of CARICOM so CARIFORUM is CARICOM and the Dominion Republic.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Well, it does not diminish the point. Sir, there have been several discussions with respect to how we could involve Haiti in the process of CARICOM integration. In fact, several reports have been written, and I can quote some for the Honourable Member for St. James Central, where they have identified the need to advance the private sector involvement in Haiti as a major area of concern.

There is something called the "Presidential Commission for Modernisation" that should be reactivated in the overall involvement in the private sector in the affairs of Haiti. They talked about increasing the involvement of civic groups in Haiti as a major area for concern, if we are to carry forward the process of integrating CARICOM at the highest level.

We all know that even though Haiti may be a Member of CARICOM, that it has not been playing a leading role in the affairs of that organisation because of the limited human and infrastructural capacities of that country which, therefore, it has its very limits in that regard.

Mr. Chairman, I would wish that the issues pertaining to the fishing agreement would concentrate on how to get a better life for the fisherfolk of Barbados, how we could engage with Trinidad and Tobago that could give rise to such involvement on behalf of the wider cross section of the fisherfolk in this country.

Sir, beyond the question of fishing, I think there is need for discussion on the overall trade within the region, which has been identified as a source of concern. If we are going to be serious about putting trade on the agenda, then the question of getting the Caribbean Single Market and Single Economy in place is going to be vitally important for us to begin to contemplate how we are going to put the whole trading arrangements together. Sir, in the absence of establishing rules, in the absence of establishing institutions within CARICOM, then the question of trade is secondary.

Sir, on this matter I want to enter some issues and again, by establishing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, is not going to redound to the benefit of anyone, unless there are levels of investment to encourage the development of enterprises that would ultimately be able to offer greater goods and services for sale throughout the CARICOM region.

This is where Barbados has failed miserably in the last number of years, notwithstanding the so-called good performance of the Barbados economy, when one looks at some of the indicators for investment. Again, this was raised earlier this week.

Sir, I have before me a study that was done on the export promotion policies with CARICOM economies. At Table 27 of this document, outside of Surinam and Haiti, Barbados had the lowest Gross

Domestic investment as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) out of all the other countries in the region. Barbados' Gross Domestic investment was only 18.1 per cent, with Haiti having 10.7 per cent and Surinam 11 per cent. These figures were for the year 2000.

Sir, when one looks at the periods 1994 to 2000, Barbados investment levels as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was again lower than that of the CARICOM regions. It gets even deeper. The foreign investment in Barbados as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was again dismal when compared to the rest of the region.

This is precisely why there was a debate by the Honourable Member for St. Peter with respect to where we are going and with respect to the current account position of Barbados. Sir, in spite of all the boasts that we have been having, Barbados has underperformed in the area of earning foreign exchange. Therefore, when one compares Barbados' exports with that of other CARICOM countries, Barbados is lagging behind with respect to the current capacity to earn foreign exchange.

The study goes even further and identifies areas of exports and imports from Barbados. Again there is information to show that the overall performance of Barbados cannot be regarded as good within the context of the CARICOM region.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

This is a very recent report, at November 5, 2003.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Of course, it is not a question of monopolising data. I would wish for the Other Side to get access.

Mr. Chairman, in the Budget speech of August 24, 1999, we engaged in the removal of licences on a range of goods. In fact, we had identified special items for special treatment because it was deemed at the time that there were still some areas of potential with respect to, and the development of trade.

The items that were selected included soya bean oil and extractions, whether or not refined, but not chemically modified. We imposed a tariff of 197 per cent on that area as a means of protection because we perceived that this particular area of manufacturing had potential in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, we then identified sausages and similar products of meats, meat offal or blood. Food preparation based on these products and sausages which are not locally produced are excluded, and we imposed a tariff of 213 per cent at the time. Other prepared or preserved meats, we put a tariff of 213 per cent.

On cooked pasta, not stuffed or otherwise prepared, meaning macaroni and spaghetti, we put a tariff of 100 per cent. On detergents, particularly powdered laundry detergents, we put a 101 per cent tariff. On T-Shirts made of cotton and other textile materials, we put a 100 per cent tariff.

Mr. Chairman, I thought it necessary to mention these areas of manufacturing because five years ago, these areas were identified as potential areas for growth in the area of manufacturing and trade in Barbados. Sir, what would be most instructive at this point, since the Government's side wants the Opposition to give it ideas and to contribute to debate as where we could go forward with respect to our economy, it would be to have a report on the performance of the manufacturing products identified in the Budget of 1999, and to see whether or not the protection offered has, in fact, redound to the benefit of the manufacturing sector, specifically these areas that were identified in 1999.

H:No. 25 (135) 420 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Sir, unless the Government can give an update to these areas clearly identified in 1999, as potential areas for growth, then there is no need to have any discussion on trade in Barbados at this stage.

Mr. Chairman, sometimes you wonder if this economy has just started because, to be able to make the kinds of contributions you want to make in this Chamber, you have to read the past and be in a position to evaluate the policies and programmes of this Administration over an extended period of time.

Sir, there is almost a quantum shift in terms of real prospect for the economy and how we can now contribute as an Opposition in advancing the causes of the Barbados economy and trade and in respect to this issue of fishing in finding a solution.

Therefore, the first step that has to be made in any look forward in correcting our current account position with respect to our capacity to import versus what we export, given that we are liberalising the market, would be an evaluation of those items identified back in 1995. In the absence of doing so, there is no need for the Opposition to make a contribution towards this debate.

I also want to say that in spite of the so-called level of resources available within the financial system, there has hardly been any major investment in new product lines that would give impetus to our export drive. We have had a situation in which resources are available but the question is, are we finding areas of opportunities for persons to invest in, that would allow us to compete within the region and beyond as a means of having a sustainable growth path and one of potential development for the economy?

I thought it necessary to identify where we stood in this whole question of fishing and that we would like to see policies being put in place at this time to benefit the fisherfolk. I thought it was unfair to criticise the Democratic Labour Party and apportion blame to an agreement in 1991/92. I think it is necessary now to state exactly where we are with respect to our negotiations and whether or not the fisherfolk are any better off as a result of the last five months of discussion.

I think it is necessary for us to determine where our economic zone is so that we can defend it and,

most importantly, to be able to determine whether there are resources lying within the economic zone that are rightfully those of the Government of Barbados. If that is so, we can clearly begin to identify why there is a need for an engagement with Trinidad with respect to sharing any resources that lie on the seabed between Trinidad, Tobago and Barbados.

Sir, this Administration is prone to go back and link the Democratic Labour Party with everything that goes wrong in Barbados. It is an approach I hope would be finally laid to rest and when we engage in discussion, that it could be about the future governance of this country, whether it be financial resources, fishing, trading, manufacturing or tourism.

Sir, it is time to stop hunting for policies that were put back in place back in the 1990s when those policies would have done extremely good for Barbados. We are willing to be engaged, but we are not going to accept criticism when it is unfounded or has no basis in history or in the current affairs of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Mr. L. R. TULL:

Mr. Chairman, if there is one area of public affairs that should transcend partisanship it should be foreign affairs. Our foreign affairs evolved from shared values in the society and we are fortunate that there is a great deal of homogeneity in Barbados because we do not have the sharp divisions of race, religion or cultures that exist in other countries. Barbadians, because of values that have been inured from time immemorial, tend reflectively to feel that we should have the same conclusion to every problem. We quarrel in many areas of public life, but there are many nuances between what one person and group may feel and what another does but in foreign affairs, we instinctively understand where we should be on the issues.

Sir, this has always characterised our discussions on foreign affairs in Parliament from the time we became independent in 1966.

In my view, the greatest crisis that the Caribbean has faced in my time as a member of the Legislature is the one in the 1980s in Grenada. In 1983, there was a Resolution before this House and there was a debate on the whole Grenada problem which was characterised by a great deal of seriousness, thoughtfulness and consensus. At that time, the Government briefed the late Errol Barrow, the Leader of the Opposition, as to what caused the countries in the Caribbean to act. It is my personal recollection that Mr. Barrow did not agree with every single aspect of the brief but that overall it met his agreement because instinctively Barbadians reacted in a certain way and he fell into that pattern.

I do not know what has changed that has brought about this bitter division between This Side and the Opposition, but I am saddened by it.

Sir, I am saddened by what was said about the Estimates because the Opposition must play its role when dealing with the issues of trade, the economy and social policy. I am urging Parliament to transcend these partisan positions in important areas of foreign affairs. It was mooted at some time that there should be a Standing Committee of Parliament on foreign affairs.

Asides.

H25/16:30

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Asides.

Mr. L.R. TULL:

I have the experience and the background and more important the interest ...

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

On a point of order. I did not particularly wish to interrupt but there are divisive noises coming from across the Floor. There was in the last Parliament a Standing Committee for the first time ever in the history of Barbados on foreign affairs and foreign trade. We are trying, for some time now, to reinstate such a Standing Committee in this Parliament but we are waiting for a long time to get from the other side of the House and the Opposition the names of their...

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

On a point of elucidation. We have not been formally, in terms of the quantity, asked to sit on that Committee. We have expressed a willingness verbally but just let us know. Let us know how many people from This Side can sit on the Committee. That has not been stated.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. George South, please continue.

Mr. L.R. TULL:

We have tried over the years to have a common CARICOM foreign policy. Ministers of Foreign Affairs met at the four major conferences, for example, the United Nations General Assembly and Organisation of the American States, and tried to work out a common CARICOM position. There have been CARICOM Foreign Ministers meetings to try to articulate common policies on foreign trade and to some extent they succeeded.

It seems strange that while we should seek to have common positions with fellow members of CARICOM, we are struggling to have common positions between political parties within Barbados. It is ludicrous that we could try with 13 countries to try to hammer out on foreign affairs but we are at war with ourselves domestically. We have to get beyond this and it is not difficult.

Sir, although there are stresses in the common CARICOM position and foreign policy, particularly in

these days when we see that Jamaica, if what I am reading is correct, is unilaterally taking positions on Haiti and Aristide, when there are divisions between Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados over maritime problems and fisheries and between Suriname and Guyana and Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

Sir, despite these things, we have to continue because of our position in the world to harmonise our positions and to limit to every extent possible divisions in this region. It is going to require a high level of diplomatic activity. We cannot be shouting at each other. We cannot be quarrelling at all times and involved in name calling. I mean name calling and fighting between Barbados and any other country in the region.

Sir, we have to be restrained in the things we do and say at this time. It is a process and let us follow it. We have had a good relationship with Trinidad and Tobago over the years. I remember, since 1978, the Governments of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago meeting in a series of bilaterals and establishing a framework for collaborative activity between the two countries. There was a Memorandum of Understanding in those days.

I remember when the Mount Hope Medical Complex was set up in Trinidad and Tobago a remarkable thing happened. The then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams, invited Barbados to put a Barbadian on the Mount Hope Managing Committee Council. This was the first time that I have ever heard in this region that one country was inviting a national of another country to come in and be part of it, and that related to the planning of the Mount Hope Medical Complex. Sir, Professor Waldron was the Barbadian on that Council.

Sir, we had a hand in working out, under the aegis of the Prime Ministers of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, a number of enduring relationships. It was not only in relation to Mount Hope, but in areas of investment. There was an agreement on common investment between Trinidad and Tobago for the first time in a formalised sense, since 1978.

In those days Trinidad had agreed to provide oil to Barbados at preferential rates and that is how things were. It is true that there were also some difficulties immediately after because we are now hearing about the problem with trade and monitoring of licences by Barbados. Sir, that is mild to compare to what we experienced in Trinidad and Tobago in those days.

I think that there was something called "ECOs". It was as difficult for Barbadian manufacturers to get into Trinidad and Tobago as it would be difficult for some of my friends to get into heaven.

Asides.

Mr. L.R. TULL:

It was extremely difficult in those days. I also remember the late Sir Harold St. John, who was then our Minister of Trade, was moved out of exasperation at the problems we were experiencing in getting goods into Trinidad and Tobago, to make the famous "tit for tat" speech that was carried across the region and caused a great deal of reaction in the market. Sir, that did not prevent the two countries from doing business together and we have to continue in that vein.

Sir, I do not know enough about the fishing dispute and maritime boundaries dispute to make any

informed comments at this stage. In the fullness of time, I will be fully ready to do that, but not yet. I do not want to speak for the sake of speaking. I know all about the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention. As a matter of fact, I believe that I signed for Barbados in Montego Bay in the 1990s.

Asides.

Mr. L.R. TULL:

I have some glancing contact with it. but I will be less than honest if I say at this stage that I am fully apprised of all the facts and circumstances to spout off, so I will not do that. I want to move beyond that.

Sir, in dealing with the general concepts of foreign affairs applications in the country, we have to bear in mind that a number of historic sea changes have taken place in the relationship between states and how they operate. There has been a fundamental geopolitical change that has taken place in the last few weeks.

H25:

16.40 p.m.

Sequence 137

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Mr. L. R. TULL:

Sir, When I was Minister of Foreign Affairs of this country, we were concerned about what was happening in the Caribbean because, in those days - that was the cold war period - the Soviet Union was very active in the waters of the Caribbean and Russian nuclear submarines used to be just off the coast of Barbados and all through this region the so-called progressive forces of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada were in and out.

There was a sense of political and ideological turmoil that this country never experienced before those days nor had experienced since. Those were different days and the question of security was paramount.

How many people, Mr. Chairman, know that young Barbadian men in those days used to go off to places like Lybia, East Germany, Bulgaria and the Soviet Union to be trained as ...

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL:

Many of them are still around and are known to me. I know them well. I was very much involved in these things. That was a different age. This is a fundamental geopolitical change. We do not have that anymore. By the time the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union felt that the Caribbean was no longer important - we were important when they thought that there was enough activity in our region for them

to take note of - and as soon as the waters became placid and calm again, the United States of America looked away and looked to Eastern Europe and showered all the investments into Eastern Europe and parts of the Middle East. All this big talk in 1983 about the Caribbean Basin Initiative and these grand plans for the Caribbean, all came to nought because we are no longer in the position we used to be.

Mr. Chairman, we are dealing with the new world and the shift in foreign policy must reflect it because there is less international politics on the agenda today than there was in those days. In those days, the United Nations used to be concerned with issues like disarmament and that kind of thing. Gradually, the problems of development forced itself onto the agenda and international politics is now taking a secondary role to international economics and international trade. There is a big shift and we have now to look more at the second half of the heading of the Ministry, foreign trade, than at the old-fashioned foreign affairs which was substantially political.

Mr. Chairman, I want to make a comment or two...

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

You would have to come back after....

Mr. L. R. TULL:

Is the 15 minutes up, Sir?

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Yes, so you would have to come back.

Mr. L. R. TULL:

Thank you, Sir.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Mr. Chairman, let me begin first by saying that, like the Honourable Member for St. George South, I am also a little bit concerned about the things that have happened, particularly as it relates to this debate, and where we have gone with this particular debate as it relates to the issues within CARICOM. A man that was much wiser than I am once said that the world is less about assembly lines from where I sit and a lot more about agreement lines from where he sits.

Sir, all of the foreign policy issues that we talked about, and that we would debate today, or that we would debate under this Head obviously have some level of impact for each and every sector in this society. In the case of health, we are a member of the Pan American Health Organisation and the World Health Organisation. In the case of agriculture, we are a member of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

In the case of tourism, we are a member of the World Tourism Organisation and, at the CARICOM level, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. Therefore, everything that we do in foreign affairs will impact upon how we run our lives and how we would develop the people of Barbados in the future.

Sir, I am not going to be as simplistic as to say, as the Honourable Member for St. James Central described it, as being simple or petty, that our foreign policy must be informed by our domestic policy.

If we take what the Honourable Member for St. George South has said relative to international economics now becoming the more important aspect of foreign affairs more so than the other foreign political issues, and we understand that real economic security depends upon our ability to diversify and to integrate into a larger world, then it must be clear that whatever we do domestically will inform what we need to do at the level of our foreign affairs whether that be in this region, in this hemisphere or globally.

Sir, I will start first with CARICOM. Like most players in the tourism industry, I am concerned about what has happened in this dispute between Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, but I am not going to be as “doomy” and gloomy as the Honourable Member for St. John. I think this particular aspect of our business is important.

For example, in CARICOM alone the CARICOM markets are fundamentally important to the development of tourism in Barbados and the rest of the region. As a matter of fact we got more visitors from CARICOM last year than we got from a major market from like Canada. Of those figures we got almost 30 000 visitors from Trinidad and Tobago. We believe that this year, counting issues like cricket and the like, that we are going to get even more, so anything that creates a basis for any disruption between this longstanding relationship between Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago obviously would have an adverse impact upon the tourism sector which obviously will redound to some negative aspect of the development of the industry.

Sir, the maritime dispute is therefore of concern to us. Outside of the central issues of the dispute, we are concerned about how it would affect the tourism industry, but I do not believe, like the Honourable Member for St. John, that the dispute has divided us as much as he would like to proffer to the people of Barbados.

Sir, the one thing I do not want to do is to send a message from here in this Chamber that we have created this deep gulf and this deep divide between ourselves and Trinidad and Tobago over an issue that cannot be fixed by talking about issues when people went down to Carnival and the like.

I am saying that, yes, there is a dispute and, yes, there are issues to be resolved but I am not going to make them sound as if they are so much to the detriment of our relationship that it is going to affect our people because I understand how much that CARICOM market means to us and how much that Trinidad and Tobago market means to us in the tourism sector.

There is some concern, obviously, but I would not be led to believe as well that there are simplistic solutions as put forward by the Honourable Member for St. John and some others about how easily we can resolve this matter. Mr. Chairman, without prejudice to the matters referred to now to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) I believe that it is important that all Barbadians, more so the Opposition, understand very clearly the concept that we are putting together, why we are doing what we are doing as a Government and why they need to be on our side.

I am going to put this bluntly because the impression that is created by what the Opposition has been saying, even though they state that they are in agreement with the Government, is one that we are divided on. That is the issue whether or not we want to admit it.

House 25 Sequence 138

4:50 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Several Honourable Members in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber, more particularly the Honourable Members for St. Lucy and St. Michael North West, have stated publicly that we are supporting the Government of Barbados insofar as its action pertaining to the marine delimitation dispute with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. That has been stated for the records.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Mr. Chairman, the issue must be that the solidarity that the Government needs... This is not an issue to divide two political parties in Barbados. What is the point in saying that the Opposition has agreed but on every occasion they speak, their words sound as though they are divided on the matter.

Mr. Chairman, how we view the entire debate and all of its implications are important. It is important that from Barbados we send a message that we are together on this issue. Sir, the protection of our maritime space is vital to our economic future. It is particularly important and vital to the economic future of all Barbadians and it cannot be reduced only to an issue in relation to fishing. We need to look after the fisherfolk in this country but to try to reduce the entire debate to that... and we have said to the memory of the late Sir Harold St. John, that the fishing agreement cannot be separated from the matter of the maritime limitation.

Mr. Chairman, whenever one hears the Opposition speaking, it sounds as though the two issues could be separated. This Government has always said that the two issues must be married if we are to create the best social and economic environment for our people's future.

Mr. Chairman, the issue of the maritime environment being fundamental to our future existence in this very much larger picture... I believe the Honourable Member for St. James Central would have outlined the issues of telecommunications, access to travel and recreation. Sir, there are more fundamental issues that speak to how we deal with the maritime space, apart from those issues of mineral deposits and fishing.

Sir, this is not a partisan issue for something as fundamental as this to the existence of all Barbadians. The Leader of the Opposition said there were very technical issues and he is not a maritime lawyer, neither am I, but if we detect a lukewarmness in the Opposition, then we have to put it that way and bring them around to a Christian understanding about what is fundamental to the development of this society.

Mr. Chairman, I heard talk to the effect that if the Democratic Labour Party has done something in the past which now impacts upon the situation, then it should not be highlighted. Sir, this is how I view this

issue. If they were in a situation where the Treaty of Chaguaramas between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago was signed when they were in office, and the matters being brought to light now were not brought to light then, I would consider that the Administration at that time would have been delinquent in doing what should have been done during that space.

Mr. Chairman, to draw an example, we have signed onto something through the International Maritime Organisation call the ISPS Code for Ships, which is a security code. Sir, the security code says that if Barbados signs onto the code, we must put a number of things in place at our Port, to ensure that our Port is safe for cruise ships. Sir, it not only affect Barbados. If some of the other ports in the chain are not compliant with the particular code, then Barbados could stand to lose parts of its itinerary, simply because the other people in CARICOM are not in sync.

Mr. Chairman, if that is not highlighted by the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport, I believe we would have been delinquent in our duties at this time. Sir, I drew that analogy to say that if the Democratic Labour Party had held the reins of Government at the time when the Treaty of Chaguaramas was signed, I do not know why they would want to run away from it.

Sir, in regards to the issue of fisheries and looking after the fisherfolk in Barbados, I do not know of any administration that has embraced the fisherfolk of Barbados on this particular issue, or one that is looking for a better stake for the fisherfolk of Barbados than the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Whenever we need to bring facts, we expose those who are the real champions of the lower class and of the poor people of Barbados. Sir, the fact that our response to the arresting of two fishermen highlighted this matter in the first place and the seriousness with which we went after the issue with those last two fishermen, in my opinion, certainly highlights how this Administration has approached the issue.

The issue of our trade balance with Trinidad and Tobago is also important to our survival. The monitoring licences that were introduced, I believe are necessary and if used well, would redound to the benefit of us all.

Sir, there are persons in the tourism sector who are very concerned with inputs into the sector. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West highlighting a number of areas where licences were supposed to be removed, which are supposed to be areas in which Barbados could create a regional state and possibly a global one.

Sir, I too would be concerned, particularly in light of the fact that Barbados already has high input costs within its tourism sectors. Therefore, I would be concerned about issues regarding international trade and business development. Sir, it is a concern. There are people in the tourism sector who are looking at it, but I believe this is why we engage in such debates.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that, at this time, it is important for us to understand clearly how we need to protect the future of our people. Sir, from where I sit, it is not only about the present time. It is about the possibilities of touching another time. I believe that is what is important to the development of any society and we on This Side will continue to put issues that are as fundamental as these to the people of Barbados in the way they need to be put.

I am obliged to you.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Chairman, I rise to make a contribution under this Head, particularly recognising the critical importance which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade will play in a very complex world. Sir, notwithstanding Barbados' small size, relative to the giants of the world in terms of its physical size, economic strength and military might, it has to navigate its way in this world, based on a very carefully crafted foreign policy.

I note with particular interest that this year Barbados will be the Chair of the Council on Foreign Relations. I believe that organ within CARICOM will be tried and certainly tested, both from within, as we can already see, based on the situation with Haiti, as well as without in terms of using CARICOM as a point of insertion into the ACS, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the CARICOM European Union Post Lome' Agreement, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and a whole range of matters including a range of international treaties dealing with human rights, environmental treaties, security council mandates, particularly in the post September 11, 2001 era.

H:No. 25 (139)500 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

There are a few matters on which I want to focus specifically. I support most of the perspectives that have been raised in relation to Haiti, but our greatest contribution is when Barbadians commit themselves at the level where they can be most effective.

Sir, we have a long history and have built up great expertise in the creation and effective functioning of institutions which can work to build and maintain democracy and empower poor people. We have become experts in developing educational and health systems, in methods of empowering small businesses and we should not take those skills for granted.

Sir, I believe we can make our greatest contribution in helping to build institutional capacity drawn on our experiences. We were only independent from 1966 and people are amazed how we live, how our institutions function and how at ease we are whether within our own borders with our own people or playing on the world stage.

Sir, we can make our most vital contribution not on the high level of international strategy on who escorted who out of the country or who will give asylum, and those high level issues, but on the level where there will be a positive impact on the lives of the ordinary Haitian man and woman.

Mr. Chairman, Barbados was part of the Summit of the Americas Initiative in 1994 where 33 out of 34 countries in the Hemisphere got together and agreed on a broad framework for prosperity, to so raise the tide of prosperity within the Hemisphere that the individual boats of the countries would rise with the

tide. The initiative included good governance, justice, security, trade, education and health.

Unfortunately, the initiative was hijacked by the Americas and we only now hear about trade, through the Free Trade Areas of the America and security which is pushed in a one-dimensional way against terrorism. The wider concept of security pushed by CARICOM speaks to the issues that confront us. It is not just terrorism but matters relating to drug trafficking, money laundering, the fight against HIV/AIDS, natural disasters and the potential for environment disasters in particularly in relation to the use by the industrial world of the Caribbean sea as a highway for the transit of hazardous waste.

These issues have not gained the attention which we think they deserve. It is part of the challenge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to struggle to keep these issues on the agenda and not let it be dominated by the interest of the largest and wealthiest power in the Hemisphere where trade and terrorism are the only issues right now.

Mr. Chairman, the great work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade lies here in CARICOM, and it is fortuitous that Barbados will be the Chair of the Council on Foreign Relations. It is my perspective that the Caribbean sea joins us and not separates us because there is more ocean in the Caribbean than land space. There are two frontiers that the world needs to conquer, the fullest use of the ocean resources and those of other planetary systems because the history of mankind shows that the survival and prosperity of our race depend on having an expansionist viewpoint where you can live and sail across the ocean and look for more space.

Sir, we in the Caribbean are the only people who have not so far come up with an organised way in which we can fully exploit the marine resources between us whether for transportation, food or minerals. Therefore, the matter of the exclusive economic zone is fundamental, given the close proximity of the islands. The matter of Barbados and Trinidad is not isolated and there is clearly for all the countries in the region to have a Caribbean approach to maritime delimitation so that we can know the areas we can properly exploit.

I am pleased to know that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has secured on behalf of Barbados, an agreement with Guyana which shows that it is possible within the framework of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, within the framework of the scientific knowledge available, to come to an agreement on maritime delimitation.

I am also pleased to know that there are plans to start negotiations with St. Vincent and the Grenadians, St. Lucia and France with respect to Martinique and Guadeloupe. I look forward to the day when across the Caribbean region, rather than having to spend energy on arguing back and forth over delimitation matters between us, we would use that collective energy to be able to protect our joint space from exploitation by third parties.

H25/17:10

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

It is no secret that the Koreans are known to come through the waters with drift nets catching the great and the small, whereas our fishermen selectively fish out what they want and by extension leave what they do not want. Those third parties, when they have their drift nets take in everything and what they do not use, they simply throw away. At the end of the day our marine resources are robbed, but we do not spend time protecting against that. We spend time fighting against one another.

Sir, in addition, in the Caribbean Sea, Barbados, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, must continue to push for the Caribbean Sea to be recognised as a special area, an area of environmental significance. I believe that this matter would have been one of the matters raised at the Conference of Island Developing States in Barbados in 1994.

I also believe that it comes up on the agenda at the United Nations in the ten-year review because for these major United Nations' matters, there is a ten-year after review and we need to make sure that we push once again. In that way we will be able to ensure that with the protection of the United Nations, we are able to stop the Japanese and others from using the Caribbean sea as a highway.

Sir, we do not know what it is that they have on board. Green Peace would let us know at times but they do not officially inform us. Sir, do you know what would be the impact of a boat travelling in the Caribbean with radioactive waste or with some environmental waste? We cannot afford that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, we also need our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue to push for the initiative that Barbados had raised, that they are not getting the support, but there is a need for a common CARICOM fisheries resource management plan and policy. Sir, fish are migratory. They are not trapped in some big net around Barbados or in a big tank around Trinidad or St. Vincent. They move throughout.

Sir, I must tell you that I like the Discovery Channel. Experiments have been done where someone dropped a bottle with a message in the Mississippi River and it ended up on the beaches of California. It showed that the current took it either around Latin America or through the Panama Canal. We also know of the Sahara dust and the West Nile virus and the speculation of how it travelled across the Atlantic.

We are all one world and the reality is that in the Caribbean region there would be some local movement because we all have islands of reefs and so on. Therefore, we need to manage our fishing stock across the region to make sure that we have food for our people into the future.

I believe we need within this Eastern Caribbean region to pool our resources and to have an East Caribbean Maritime Authority so that we are able to share resources.

In fact, the Barbados OECS Functional Cooperation Agreement is the foundation and I believe that agreement needs to be put back on the front burner. A functional cooperation agreement is just a big framework and specific action needs to be taken in each of the areas identified for a functional

cooperation to give effect and there is such synergy between Barbados and the OECS that we believe the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can pursue that opportunity.

Finally, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, which is pursued by the Prime Minister's office, is one of the matters that we need to keep on our front burner. Sir, even without the Caribbean Single Market and Economy being fully in place, Barbados already benefits, not only as exporter of manufactured goods into the OECS countries but more especially as an exporter of services.

Sir, if you take a flight on LIAT on any given day, you would find persons such as from sound and lighting technicians, stage managers, dentists, lawyers, computer technicians, bankers, insurance personnel and funeral directors who are selling their services throughout the Caribbean region, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean.

Asides.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

I am an unrepentant regionalist. I believe that the future of Barbados is inextricably bound up with the future of our region and it is right when our Ministry of Foreign Affairs says that we not only look at being involved in the high worldwide matters but to ensure that here in our region and hemisphere, we are able to have a zone of peace, a zone of stability and a zone of prosperity.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Honourable Member for Christ Church East for bringing back some peace to this debate.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I want to say that we also have to understand that we do not only have to concern ourselves with the problems as they relate to the oil reserves of Barbados. We also have to recognise that our Ministry of Foreign Affairs needs to speak to some of the countries in the Caribbean who have been exploiting our maritime boundaries in the trade of substances that we do not appreciate having on our shores.

I think that a strong message should be sent to those foreign ministers in those countries who use the nighttime as an excuse to allow some of their citizens to enter our territorial boundaries without permission. It is known...

Asides.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS:

On a point of order. I do not understand what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is attempting to say, but if he frames it the way he framed it, it is utterly unacceptable. It cannot be that the foreign ministers are allowing their citizens under cover of darkness to enter our shores. I am sure that is not what he wants to say. I believe he could rephrase his statement without causing undue harm to very

innocent parties, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

Sir, it is true that sometimes as politicians we have to behave as diplomats. If I have to behave like a diplomat this evening, I do not mind doing that.

Sir, I am saying that there is common knowledge within the Caribbean region, and to us on This Side, and to countries which are involved in doing trade, that some of their citizens are involved in trade which would affect the foreign reserves of this country.

It cannot be looked at as though it is not affecting them and because it is not affecting them it cannot be affecting someone else.

Sir, a strong message must be sent to those countries involved in this practice, letting them know that we are aware that they are exporting trade to Barbados which is unacceptable. We should also request that measures be put in place to prohibit that kind of activity and to prevent citizens of such countries from being involved in a trade that is unacceptable to Barbados.

Sir, we would want to offer our support on this issue to the Government of Barbados even though the Minister of Tourism stated that we on This Side do not support the Government on foreign affairs matters, which is not correct.

I wrote an article, without the Government asking me to do so, supporting the Government and advising the Minister of Energy to cool his feet on the agreement with Trinidad on energy as it relates to natural gas until certain issues are resolved.

H25:

17.20 p.m.

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Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I am asking the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade to speak to the Minister of Energy on this particular issue because I do not think that the Ministry of Energy should go ahead and sign an agreement on natural gas when we are about to find out what our true reserves are that we have not tapped yet.

Sir, international policy dictates and international politics also dictate. We have to be very careful how people try to preempt decisions by putting something on us to tie us into agreements before we find out what we have. Until we know our reserves, we should not sign any agreements for natural gas in

Barbados. Nobody knows what we have within our maritime limit and until we explore them we need to be very careful.

It is rather interesting that all of a sudden now natural gas can be sold at a reasonable price to all the CARICOM States, but when they needed that before it was never offered.

Mr. Chairman, what is also interesting is that the other oil products, as was said by the Prime Minister of Barbados, are being sold to Barbados and the CARICOM States at a higher price than they are sold outside of CARICOM. I want to know how come that natural gas has been used as the trap to tie in the CARICOM States to the offload from Trinidad and Tobago when we are discussing territorial boundary.

We have to be very careful what we are buying into. Therefore, it would be advisable for the Minister of Energy to cool his feet on this particular agreement and watch the tide seeing that we are dealing with the sea. We also have to be very careful that in laying the pipeline that somebody is not looking for something else.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

That was all in an article. You cannot say that I am coming today to give cheap support. I have put it in black and white already.

It would be good for the Government to listen to what the Opposition is saying because it is clear to me that they do not understand international politics. Because of international politics we have suffered in here already because of CARSICOT, but the Government, instead of siding with the Opposition, used it as a political playing field to get a government.

Sir, you are going to see a different level of politics coming from This Side because we understand the importance of Barbados. We are not here to get cheap political votes because we are part of that administration that formed the Government in 1961 and we understand the importance of fighting for votes at a higher level not at a lower level where you have to pull down and tear down in order to achieve.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade sending a note to the countries that are abusing our maritime boundaries. We will support them on this particular issue because it is very vital because not only are they robbing us of our foreign exchange, but they are also destroying the minds of our people. That is very important. This is a social issue which is grounded very much in a Democratic Labour Party philosophy.

I am saying, Mr. Chairman, that if the Government wants our support on this issue, I am prepared to give them mine because if we do not do something about it we are going to continue to destroy the minds of the young people of Barbados and soon from now we will have a group of young people who would be of no use to the productive forces of Barbados. We can talk all we want about foreign policy and foreign trade but if we do not have people to engage in the foreign policy and foreign trade, we will not be going anywhere.

Mr. Chairman, this is the place in which I want to see this debate. This debate is not about hypocrites. This debate is about calling a spade a spade. That is what we need to tell our CARICOM brothers who will walk and shake our hands and then behave in another manner as if they do not know what they are doing to our country. As a Barbadian, I feel I have an obligation to point out this particular point and to make sure that it is corrected. I am in opposition and I cannot correct it. The Government needs to correct it now because the people of Barbados expect them to correct it, so they have my support on this particular issue.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. A. P. WOOD, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour the SPEAKER and asked for leave to sit again and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 540 p.m. today.

Hon. A. P. WOOD:

I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 5:40 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

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5:30 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER:

This Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken, the House was in Committee of Supply. To that it now reverts.

MR. SPEAKER left the Chair and Mr. CHAIRMAN resumed the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am happy to make a very brief contribution on this particular Head. Unfortunately I was not in my seat when the particular Head was moved by the Honourable Minister. It is always a pleasure to hear her on matters of Foreign Affairs. Her elocution, if nothing else, is usually impeccable.

Mr. Chairman, I would want to say very clearly as I have said elsewhere, that this matter of foreign affairs and foreign trade is one on which there should be no political divide. I think that the remarks from the Honourable Member for St. George South who, as a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, brings a measure of credibility to this debate, were indeed spot on.

It is, therefore, a bit puzzling to me, or rather should I say that the Honourable Member for St. James Central and to some extent the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, seem to be so determined to etch some sort of political divide between the two Parties on this matter. It is puzzling.

Mr. Chairman, it seems as though the comment that foreign policy should be viewed in terms of how it impacts on one's domestic situation, is causing some sort of disquiet but there is no need for it to be viewed that way. It is not unique to Barbados or to any country in terms of how one looks at foreign policy, how it would affect one's domestic situation.

Mr. Chairman, while the Honourable Member for Christ Church East did not spell out what institutions he might have been referring to in his speech, as the Honourable Minister of Education, invariably he might have also been referring to the potentials that we might have in developing educational institutions in a place like Haiti.

Sir, because of our tremendous record in that regard, very easily that speech could have been made by anyone in that Cabinet. Therefore, looking at foreign policy and the extension of domestic policies, need not cause such disquiet.

Mr. Chairman, we have also heard, and I think the Honourable Member for St. John has spoken about this, the question of Barbados signing out to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) with Members of the Government suggesting that all of the fallout for globalisation and trade liberalisation should be blamed on the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) because our Minister signed the document that created the World Trade Organisation (WTO), in particular the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATTs).

Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is the GATTs was not signed in a vacuum. It was at the conclusion of a round of negotiations, and if one is going to talk about the GATTs, one has to look at the General agreement on Trade and Tariffs, which preceded that, and has a history that goes back to the 1930s. Barbados, for as long as it has been an Independent nation, has been involved in multilateral arrangements. Therefore, signing the GATTs should not be viewed as any sin that the Democratic

Labour Party (DLP) has committed.

Mr. Chairman, I have heard too many Honourable Members of this Government trying to paint it that way.

Aside.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

That is an interesting point because we have heard from the Honourable Member for St. George South that enshrined in the Treaty of Chaguaramas is a clear attempt for CARICOM countries to as much as possible coordinate their foreign policies. The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown would tell you it does not always work that way, that the Commonwealth of Antigua and Barbuda in particular, sometimes like to break for themselves on various issues. Sir, at the same time, we recognise that there has been a need to coordinate our foreign policy as a regional institution, namely CARICOM. Therefore, other members of CARICOM did not sign onto the World Trade Organisation (WTO), therefore, what was Barbados supposed to do?

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I hate to interrupt, but the Honourable Member is misleading the House. No one is saying that we ought not to have signed on. What we have said over here is that we signed on without any consultation with the Opposition at the time and that we signed on without properly looking to the strategic economic interest of Barbados. We were never consulted.

Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Mr. Chairman, I am still waiting for a consultation as a Barbadian for any convention that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown has attended since she was Minister of Foreign Affairs, with her flying all over the world at the taxpayers' expense. The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown cannot come in here or anywhere and share anything with us, and now we are hearing that we did not consult with them.

Mr. Chairman, I have said that this is a non-partisan matter. Why is the Honourable Member so determined? As the most senior Cabinet Minister, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown should know better.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is misleading this Chamber when she got up and said ...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Oh, you want me say for getting up ...?

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

...And saying that misleading information has been put in this debate?

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

I am on a point of order. Sit down and keep quiet. You do not run this Chamber. Who do you think you are? Keep quiet and listen, and learn something.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

That is your problem, your mouth is always moving without your brain being in gear. Keep quiet and listen to wisdom.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Order, Please. The Honourable Member for St. John is speaking. Let me hear him. The Honourable Member stop. Please let us hear the Honourable Member. Proceed.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Thank you, Sir. The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is misleading this Chamber when she said there was no consultation prior to the Barbados Government signing onto the GATTs Agreement. At that time the Social Partnership existed and there were consultations with the private sector on a phase removal, as well as liberalisation.

Therefore, to say that we did not consult with the then Opposition, I have to put a different interpretation on that because I am going to say that there were two Honourable Members of the Cabinet with whom we had active consultations. One was an advisor to the Honourable Member of Finance at the time. He advised me of the Budget that I was alleged to have read without including the GATTs, and he obviously was an Honourable Member of the then Opposition.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

The only person who would not know that would be the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown. I am saying he was one and you cannot contradict that.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

On a point of order, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. Dame. BILLIE MILLER:

I am on a point of order.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

You cannot be on a point of order on a point of order.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Honourable Member, please, please. The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

I am not finished.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

I am on my feet, please.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

I am not finished.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

But you cannot be on a point of order on a point of order.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Member for St. John. I am on my feet.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

Oh, sorry, Sir. I did not realise you were on your feet.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Honourable Members - The Honourable Member for St. John, please. The Honourable Member for St. John was on a point of order and you cannot have a point of order on a point of order. Proceed, please.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON:

She knows that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, therefore, we consulted widely with the private sector, the Trade Union Movement and with Government Departments. Therefore, Honourable Members of the current Barbados Labour Party's (BLP) Cabinet could contradict that.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, it is not correct to say that there was any consultation with the Opposition of the day at the time.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Please continue.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

The Honourable Member for St. John should know better. When you see him in that frame, it is when his back is up against the wall.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

The Honourable Members for St. John and St. Philip South, let us hear the Honourable Member, please.

Hon. Dame. BILLIE MILLER:

It is an improper thing to say that a high level civil servant was a member of a political party at that time, who is now an Honourable Member of this Government. It is to impute an improper motive to that person.

H:No. 25 (144)550 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, it is not even sophistry, it is to misinform this House. There is no point in saying that you talked to certain people who today are in the Cabinet. Sir, at the time, the official Opposition of which I was a member was not consulted.

Mr. R.L. SEALY:

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for the City on a point of order suggested that it imputed improper motive to a civil servant who is now a member of the Barbados Labour Party but there are two members on the Opposition who can speak to that in more detail.

Mr. Chairman, traditionally there has been no real political divide on this matter and in that spirit we supported the Government in their efforts at resolving the situation with the marine delimitation dispute with Trinidad & Tobago. The same way the Honourable Member for Christ Church East in his presentation suggested that a CARICOM approach needs to be taken to many of the other marine issues like hazardous waste traversing our space and a fishery agreement, why is it that for this particular issue we have to go to the UN Law of the Sea. Sir, we support the Government in this effort and there is no dispute but I understand that CARICOM is not equipped to deal with this issue. The fact that CARICOM was deemed inadequate to resolve this dispute means that CARICOM has some work to do by way of equipping themselves to deal with issues like these.

CARICOM is in the process of creating a Court of Justice so that we do not have to go to the Privy Council as the Final Court of Appeal and I am suggesting that there is work to be done. The CARICOM Secretariat is on the verge of moving into spanking new headquarters in Georgetown and

the facility now needs to be staffed in a manner so that they can deal with these issues because, as was correctly said, there is more maritime area in the Caribbean than land space.

Mr. Chairman, on the issue of Haiti, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East raised a point and I want to suggest that we use those institutions to assist the Haitian people in their crisis.

On the question of NGOs, many of these institutions have been eroded over time and these can enrich a democracy and, as Haiti is fledgling to create a democracy, Barbados with its experience in this area can lend a hand in that regard.

Mr. Chairman, there is no divide and we agree that Barbados must play a role in Haiti and the suggestion put by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East can be taken a step further. It is this collaborative approach that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade should take in the interest of helping Haiti.

I look forward to Parliament setting up the Committee on foreign affairs and trade. I am not lobbying for a place on the Committee but I think the Honourable Member for St. George South should sit on the Committee as a former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I look forward to the Committee functioning and to cooperation between the two parties where foreign affairs and trade is concerned.

Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Chairman, I rise to make a submission on this Head. I believe that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is going to have a significant role to play with respect to the future development of Barbados. If we are moving towards a transition that is positioning our economic development on services and to a position where we are going to function within the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, as well as within the tenets and principles of the Free Trade Area of America and WTO, the role of this particular Ministry must be enhanced.

If I look at the allocation of \$42 million, I would have to contemplate whether areas of building institutional capacity through education, training and research is adequate to deal with the negotiations and capacity building that is necessary to have Barbados functioning effectively with the FTAA and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Sir, irrespective of any bipartisan position, I want to suggest that Cabinet looks closely at the type of allocation and strategy that may be required to enhance all the capabilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Sir, given that the Honourable Prime Minister has responsibility for the forward movement of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, I believe that we are going to be functioning within a set of economic dimensions that will require significant changes to how we do business here in Barbados and the types of strategy we use to enhance our capacity to export in a competitive environment. This would necessarily require a significant change in the efficiency strategy we are putting in place for the private sector and public sector because both should move toward each other rapidly.

Sir, the concern for me is where we are in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

H25/18:00

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Continuation of Dr. D.C. ESTWICK:

I am somewhat uncomfortable with the pace at which this Government is moving to implement the legislative framework along with what administrative framework there is in place, at a time when there is evidence that there is not that type of reciprocal arrangements being instituted in neighbouring CARICOM territories.

Sir, the reason why that becomes very important is because I cannot understand how we are going to get into reciprocal trade arrangements at a time when we do not have harmonisation of basic labour laws. We have not introduced those elements within a Caribbean Congress of Labour, in terms of that strategy. We have not even considered the harmonisation of social security relations, pensions, probably immigration regulations and accreditation components.

Sir, I am saying that if we are to move as rapidly as we are moving, my concerns are the social impact on Barbados when you do not have the reciprocal sorts of situations in place. Those social impacts can be worked out readily. Let us consider education. When a CARICOM member comes to Barbados and he brings his family with him, are the children going to go to a public secondary school or a private school? When they come to Barbados where are they going to get health care? Are they going to be allowed to go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital or the polyclinic and get free health care?

Sir, when one looks at housing, how are we going to deal with that? When we look at the utility services, how are we going to deal with this issue? The point is, we are already at a stage where, if I apply the demographic data from the World Health Organisation that by 2025 we should have a natural population growth of approximately 306,000 people in Barbados - Sir, at 2004 we have more than 300,000 at anyone point in time and that does not include tourists in Barbados. That includes simply those that would have been in Barbados.

Our population is 265,000 and at any point in time we have more than 35,000 nationals of the Caribbean living in Barbados. Therefore, that is over 300,000 persons at any one point in time and we then have to add the tourist traffic.

Therefore, the point I am making is that the strain that will be put on our social services will be immense. I would want to caution this Cabinet to be very careful in how they go about putting these legislative frameworks in place without having the sort of loophole necessary to deal with the sort of pressure that will come to bear.

Sir, for me, this is where I think the type of research, mass-based education and the allocation under this Head, I am not certain on a cursory look, whether it is going to be enough to do the job in the future.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

Mr. Chairman, I just want to speak for two minutes just to correct the point by the previous speaker. The concerns raised by the Honourable Member are legitimate concerns but, there are concerns that have been taken into consideration. Indeed, there is to be a protocol on contingent rights which would speak to all of the various rights of persons who enjoy the freedom of movement under the Treaty will be entitled to in respective territories.

These are issues that are still undergoing intense work at the regional level and, therefore, it is not correct to suggest that we are implementing a legislative framework to which people would have access to our social services or entitlements simply because they have been given the right to reside here.

In addition, the reality also is that most of the entitlements within the Barbadian social services are based on citizenship and not merely because a person has the right to reside in this territory. Therefore, the Honourable Member would do well to look at the various entitlements, almost all of which are rooted in statute, to see what is the legislative basis for persons to be able to access those rights.

Sir, having said that, the reality is that you do not want a society to develop where you have those who have and those who do not have. To that extent, even if they are here and they cannot access, for example, free education or aspects of the health care to which they are entitled, you would want to be able to treat to them because you would see the development of an underclass within 10 to 15 years and to that extent the issue becomes one of urgency.

For example, in the European Union there is an arrangement which allows for the accessing of social services between countries, and there is a netting out that takes place at the end of each year, depending on how many people from each country use the accumulative level of social services in a particular country. England would net out how many people use services in England, vice versa, and whoever owes who would then settle at the end of the year.

There are still a number of issues that require urgent settlement within the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, but I do not believe that there is any one of us in here who does not appreciate the urgent imperative for a Caribbean Single Market and Economy, if only because, as we would have heard today at the end of the second reading speech that we are as small entities incurring a larger degree of cost in the provision of governmental services in smaller scales and to a very real extent there is need, not only for a Caribbean Single Market and Economy but for more effective regional cooperation at a technical level.

Mr. Chairman, when I was Minister of Education I felt strongly then as I do now, that there are so many similarities between the educational systems of the region that we should all be ensuring that certain technical aspects of the delivery of education become centralised.

All of us have to develop curriculum, testing and measurement and planning and research. In a sense

when we conceptualised the EduTech Project and the Education Evaluation Centre at Cave Hill, we understood that as being able to play that support role to the many Ministries of Education in the region. For example, in the area of the judiciary, law and order, air transport and health.

Currently there are key areas undertaken by individual Governments for which we can see a better utilisation of resources, particularly given the scarce number of persons available to do the technical work in the region at more effective cost. Separate and apart from the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, in my view there is a need to draw a more urgent arrangement to be settled to allow for the coordination of technical advice in services in the provision of governmental services across the region.

Mr. Chairman, I will come back in fairness to my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, because there are other things I would want to say now but I do not want to appear to be unfair.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL:

Mr. Chairman, I want to begin my brief presentation under the Head of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade by commenting on the fact that has already been pointed out by an Honourable Member that the total amount budgeted in the coming financial year for this Ministry is amounting to 1½ per cent of the Government's total expenditure.

I want to say that, notwithstanding the Other Side of the House would have issues with its adequacy, certainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade has performed and deserves the greatest commendation for the work they have done.

It is not a well-known fact that, I believe there about 10 overseas Missions under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade which have the responsibility of monitoring all of the various matters that are going on in various capitals abroad.

H25:

18.10 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Our Mission in Geneva is heavily taxed because it has to deal with matters at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and with a whole range of other matters that it has to cover. This is a critical time in our juncture and it is important for Barbadians at home to be following the various matters which are being dealt with by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, particularly in respect of foreign trade matters.

Mr. Chairman, it is well worth reiterating that while Government may be a large and significant driver in the economy in itself, it does not conduct business or commercial enterprise. In today's globalizing environment when we talk about liberalisation of trade, while it is the Government of any country which

would have the responsibility of negotiating for its citizens in the various international fora, at the end of the day the negotiations and the commitments that are made are made on behalf of all the people in Barbados whether they be private individuals or corporate entities. It is therefore incumbent on every Barbadian to follow all the matters that are being negotiated on our behalf as best as possible.

Mr. Chairman, while the work in the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the freedom of movement of skilled nationals may have an economic component, it is essentially about the ability of Barbadians to leave here possessing certain skills to move to other parts of the Caribbean to conduct their personal and business affairs. It is therefore important that we all pay careful heed to the matters that are being negotiated.

Mr. Chairman, at this time I would want to reiterate something that the Senior Minister always said, which is, that the private sector in Barbados has to continue their efforts at tracking the negotiations. It would be remiss of me not to laud the efforts of the private sector trade team.

The private sector trade team and other Ministries have been given a particular sum of money to fund their work. It is a clear indication that foreign affairs matters and foreign trade matters go hand in hand with the conduct of business and with the conduct of commercial enterprise. It is therefore important that the private sector trade team avail itself of all of the opportunities that are available to them.

I am aware that the private sector trade team has formed part of the Barbados delegation to Cancun and has formed part of other Barbadian delegations where our Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade has been seeking to negotiate positions. This is not a one-way street. It is a situation where the private sector is able to inform the negotiating positions that are being taken by the members of the foreign trade delegation on behalf of the businesses that they represent.

Mr. Chairman, it is especially important as well in the area of services, another area in which my Ministry's work dovetails very nicely with the work of foreign trade because while it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade that is responsible for negotiating our commitments in services in the World Trade Organisation and in the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the services sectors in Barbados falling within my portfolio have to make their issues known and have to inform the negotiations of their stance in respect of the various requests that are made of the Barbados Government and also their stance in respect of the requests that we as a country would make of other nations.

Mr. Chairman, I recently had occasion to speak of the requests that are being made of Barbados in terms of commitments in the legal field, a field that is close to my heart, that being my training. Commitments are also being made in terms of engineering and many other areas. All of this stems from the fact that as we seek to penetrate other peoples' markets, other countries would equally be looking to make their entrée into the Barbados environment. Therefore, we need to know what requests are being made of us so that our private sector industries can make an input into enabling the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade to negotiate satisfactorily so that it becomes truly free trade and liberalised trade.

Mr. Chairman, the work of the 10 overseas Missions cannot be doubted and I want to commend the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade for managing such a fine team of staff. However, from my own experience there are still many skills that need to come into to the realm of Barbadian

negotiations and into our capacity building. I want to speak of such things as skills in international trade law.

It is to my knowledge that most of the international trade law briefs that are handed out in the Caribbean generally end up going to law firms in Washington, in London and in Toronto. It is time that the people of Barbados develop skills in these areas.

There are one or two Barbadians who have developed skills in these areas but these are not just skills that are going to be needed by the Government sector because when a commercial enterprise in Barbados, think of one of our big conglomerates, has to wade through myriads of trade rules to look to see what various obligations are required of them as they attempt to penetrate other peoples' markets, they are not going to be able to run to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade staff to give them clarification.

It is important that they draw unto themselves the various skills that are going to be required by them so that in the same way they would approach a lawyer in town and ask them for advice on a legal problem relating to contracts, they should be able to approach a professional, whether it is a lawyer, or an accountant, to ask and obtain professional advice in relation to their international trade matters.

Mr. Chairman, for too long though it seems to me that we have considered that our trading obligations are the sole purview of the Government and its public servants. This attitude is one which will ensure that our private citizens continue to rely on the Ministry for advice and direction. In my view, the time has come when we need to prepare ourselves to move away from that perspective. Certainly, we have the Attorney-General's Chambers but we regulate our legal affairs by hiring our own service providers. We, therefore, need to see people trained in international economics. If there is such a branch, I really cannot say.

The point is that international trade issues are going to be everyday issues that businessmen sitting in Bridgetown, in Warrens and in Oistins are going to have to be able to deal with and in a way that is swift and conclusive. Notwithstanding the fact that it is the Government that will carry a dispute before one of the international tribunals such as the World Trade Organisation, our enterprises need to have the skills available to them so that they, without having to come to the Government, are able to police, research and make recommendations to the Government to be able to advance their cause before these international arenas.

I think that Barbados is well served by many professionals within the ambit of the civil service, but I do feel that the time has come when the private sector needs to take on themselves the responsibility to train young men and women into the skills sects that are going to be so vital for the due discharge and conduct of their businesses.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to speak on the smooth functioning of the country teams. As colleagues and Honourable Members of this Honourable House would know, it is a policy of this Government that we team up all of the various agencies that have to function in the foreign arenas in one place so that all of the information that might be requested is immediately available in one location.

The role of the Honorary Consul is one that I believe many Barbadians are not too well aware of. I

suspect that many of us may feel that the term “honorary” is the most significant term in that two-word phrase. However, the fact is that the Honorary Consuls that have accepted the obligation to work on behalf of the Government and people of Barbados do so without a single penny of remuneration from the Government.

House 25 Sequence 147

6:20 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Mr. D. D. MARSHALL:

Many of them have longstanding relationships with Barbados. Indeed, some of them are Barbadian who live abroad. I believe the work of the Honorary Consul, wherever they may be found, is going to play a significant role in how Barbados is perceived in the eyes of the business community in the various cities.

I am aware that a trade show is to be launch by the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (BIDC) in Houston, Texas, and I have asked them to ensure that they not only invite the Honorary Consul which is to be found in Houston, but those other Honorary Consuls that are found in the surrounding areas, so that they can see firsthand what is being done when we market Barbados, so that they are able to deal with the various enquires that might be made of them on a daily basis.

I know that the time is here when we need to see about having Honorary Consuls appointed in the Far East.

Asides.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

I believe there is the need, of course, to have many Honorary Consuls. Their work is invaluable in terms of positioning Barbados in various capitals in terms of ensuring that economic opportunities come home to Barbados. In this regard, I would like to laud them for the tremendous work they have been doing.

Sir, these are times when we cannot talk about turning back the tide of trade liberalisation or globalisation. Therefore, the role of this particular Ministry is going to be of increasing significance as we go forward. I, therefore, would want to laud the efforts thus far and to commend all Barbadians to actively support the work of this Ministry, not just by standing in the background, but by making themselves aware of our commitments under the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, by making themselves aware of the issues that face us both in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Mr. Chairman, this is not going to be a successful process unless we carry every Barbadian with us. This Government has been successful in our efforts to bring along all of Barbados and our foreign

relations will be no different.

I am obliged to you.

Mr. R. D. JONES:

Mr. Chairman, very briefly we have had extremely interesting discussion this afternoon on this particular Head and I would want to add my voice in support of many aspects of the discussion which emanated from the Floor this evening, and to recognise that there is immerging consensus on some of the ways forward for Barbados, relative to what is coming from both the Government side and the side of the Opposition, the Democratic Labour Party (DLP).

Mr. Chairman, the direction of Barbados' foreign policy is about a strategic interest relative to the development of its economy and society and there has to be a common focus on the policymakers on its design and direction. That is why I compliment the Honourable Member, even though there was a slight discordance earlier in tone, but I am proud to know that tone has lessened and more sense has begun to immerge relative to this particular direction.

Mr. Chairman, against all others, Barbados stands as a single people in the defence of our territorial integrity and national interest, may they be our friends or enemies. At the end of the day, as a people with one common interest and one common heritage, we have to go forward against all of those who believe that if our voices become fragmented, those countries could exploit that fragmentation to their own interest. We would have to avoid that particular fragmentation when it comes to certain issues relative to the development of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, our current desire to protect our national integrity and our territorial sovereignty cannot be frittered away by discordance in our voices. We have to stay focussed on this particular issue relative to states even if they are near or far away.

We will have particular trajectories, either developed in our voices or in our minds, as how we should progress relative to these things, but let us not see it as a quarrel. We need to toss-up many aspects of discussion to find the best hybrid to carry the agenda of all Barbadians forward.

Therefore, I would want to encourage the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs that wherever possible, to invite persons from all walks of life in Barbados who have an understanding of where we would want to carry Barbados relative to its foreign policy. Let us invite those persons from the University of the West Indies (UWI) who we have trained at a great expense to the taxpayers of this country where their voices and knowledge are important to carry this country forward. Let us utilise the talents of past and current Members of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) where it is necessary on these particular issues, if we recognise that there is no divide and that we need to have bipartisan interest being reflected all across the landscape. If we are to echo some of the words of the Prime Minister where he says that this Parliament would have a responsibility of such magnitude and what we do will set the foundation or the boardwalk on which we all must travel, is absolutely important.

Mr. Chairman, I would never agree with the view of the obviously junior representative in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that our national policy is not tied to our foreign policy. In truth and in fact, the foreign policy immerges directly out of our national interest and our national policy. Sir, I know that

the Senior Member of that Ministry will pull him aside and tell him not speak out of turn because it represents a misunderstanding of the national policy initiatives and directions of Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES:

Let us not assist him in his celebrations.

Mr. Chairman, the agreement with Guyana is a move in the right direction. I have a particularly soft spot for Guyana, recognising that there are strong and deep historical ties between the people of Barbados and the people of Guyana. In fact, by and large, we are one people, and if we look across the Caribbean and would want to identify with any single group, it would be the Guyanese with which we can identify quite solidly. We have had historical ties. Sir, even though I am not a shrimp lover, I remember we had a company, International Seafoods Limited, which had shrimp boats in our Careenage that used to fish for shrimp off the coast of Guyana.

Sir, there is a strong link in trade in Guyana and I would want to see the relationship between Guyana and Barbados developed and cemented even further, where there is a common exploitation of human and other resources of these two countries by each others' citizens.

I think that Barbados, with its knowledge of financial, capital, human and technical resources, can assist Guyana in its total development because that is going to redound to the national interest of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I would also want to see a direct relationship further developed and cemented with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). I would not necessarily want to identify any particular countries within that sub-grouping of the Caribbean, but there are obviously some countries that we can more comfortably sit and work with, each developing its own space and then exploiting the resources of that space for the development of the people of Barbados, OECS and Guyana.

H:No. 25 (148)630 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Mr. R.D. JONES:

Leadership by Barbados in many areas of Caribbean developmental activity must continue. The Democratic Labour Party has written into the records of this country and the Caribbean our interest and determination for the success of regional institutions and countries. We will not deviate from that path but continue to work assiduously with all those committed to this form of development of the Caribbean people because we have one experience as a people in this part of the world.

Sir, many institutions of the Caribbean can be found here in Barbados because we provide the right time of atmosphere and technical expertise that can continue to guide Caribbean development now and into the future. The Barbados Labour Party which currently has the reins of power must continue to

develop this and draw on the expertise of the Democratic Labour Party who has been in the forefront of successfully developing Caribbean institutions and establishing them here.

Sir, how we debate in international forums such as the United Nations, its associated agencies, the IMF, the World Bank, ILO, et cetera, is absolutely important. Our voices must continue to be firm and strong and we must let the world know that though we are a small country, that we are people of integrity, decency and that we will not move away from these strands which are part and parcel of the Barbadian personality. I urge that this kind of voice and strength continue so that Barbados will continue to be respected as a nation in these international forums.

Mr. Speaker, some of these institutions are extension of certain metropolitan capitals and when we speak in the international forums, we are coming up against the mighty powers of this world who, by and large, do not have our interest at heart but their own strategic interest. If our interest coincides with theirs, we are loved but if it does not we are spanked or told we are wayward children, but if we are firm in our determination we will be better served.

Mr. Chairman, one of the developmental issues of the 21st Century, as we grapple with these notions of globalisation and liberalisation, is the issue of trade. Sir, trade is at the nexus of what is happening in the world and how you gain advantage and we would want to see our trade ambassadors work to get a foot into these countries for our goods and services for the development of Barbados.

Sir, as I conclude, I return to my introductory comments. We must remain focus, galvanise ourselves towards the notion of our foreign policy and utilise all the resources of Barbados to assist us in that area.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS:

Mr. Chairman, at the beginning of this intervention I am grateful to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy for raising the issue of the proposition for gas lines being run in the Caribbean. This issue is potentially one of great concern to the Caribbean in the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy because the access to energy is the most valuable of the resources we have.

The question which faces the world today is, how do oil-based economies continue to function given the current situation where the price of oil at the pump is at a record high in many parts of the western hemisphere. In addition, there is the question of identifying and trying to source alternative sources of energy.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy quite rightly said that this situation raises some concerns for the countries of the Caribbean. Essentially Jamaica, an oil-based economy, recognises that its plant is very antiquated and also the negative effects on its environment of the use of oil. It wants to retool the entire economy and has recognised natural gas as the appropriate alternative.

Sir, to source natural gas becomes the issue and they are looking to their CARICOM partner, Trinidad, in the same way as we have done in the context of petroleum-based products. However, the internal market dynamic in Trinidad is one in which the monopolistic practices of the 1960s and 1970s have now given way to a liberalised framework without there actually having been a regulatory system put in

place.

This has given vent to price discrimination in the context of access of natural gas for the Jamaican market as opposed to that which can be obtained by companies in Trinidad & Tobago. The same principle applies and petroleum-based products in Barbados may in some instances be 30 per cent more expensive than they are sold in Trinidad & Tobago.

The issue of trying to make natural gas more available and accessible across the region is vitally important. It is a matter which has now been set aside by the Heads to the investment of a Special Energy Commission. Sir, the fact of the matter remains that in the context of us trying to build and develop the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, the disputes which have arisen between Jamaica and Trinidad and which potentially arises between Barbados and Trinidad are those to which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is speaking.

If we run a pipeline through the Eastern Caribbean, the adequate access by all members, the question of costing and the mechanics of it are all issues which we now have to sit and thrash out.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy raises the point of us having to try to ensure that we are not disadvantaged in going the route of a pipeline. This is a valid point and I give him credit for it. In addition, it speaks to the point which the Honourable Member for St. Philip West spoke about, that is, the extent to which the governance system in the CARICOM region is adequate.

The reality is that the Caribbean Court of Justice is not up and running and the dispute mechanisms which need to be put in place to effectively and swiftly put these issues to rest are not in existence.

H25/18:40

Sequence 149

Wednesday March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS:

Sir, in addition to that, I am also indebted to the Honourable Member for the question on the education budget. The education budget in the Ministry of Foreign Trade has increased and I believe that we can always make a satisfactory call for it to be increased even further. There is no doubt in my mind, however, that adequate work has been done in the context of trying to find alternatives other than straight out of the Government's purse.

Sir, one such example is the question of partnership. It needs to be said that the University of the West Indies, I believe this year, will be creating a Chair in international trade. It presents for the first time in this region an authoritative academic institution with which Ministries of Trade can partner in the context of identifying areas of concern, identifying areas which are potentially disputatious and trying to work towards resolving some of these difficulties academically by way of the same research process to

which the Honourable Member for St. Philip West spoke.

Sir, above and beyond that, the Ministry of Foreign Trade has committed itself this year to the creation and operation of a public trade reference centre within the Ministry. Again, this is expected to be a fully computerised department which would enable persons who are private sector oriented, who are, perhaps, academically oriented, or who are just simply interested relevant parties, to be able to access some of the information which is vital for the work they are undertaking.

Sir, it also raises the question of the education issue or ability to strategise and come up with an appropriate mechanism to solve some of the region's problems, which brings us to a very pressing and burning question about the economic partnerships.

Sir, agriculture is one such area. It is a commonly known fact that there is a sugar protocol with the European Union which has been in existence since 1975. This protocol guaranteed us certain types of access, rice, sugar, et cetera. The sugar protocol specifically guaranteed us sugar.

The fact of the matter is that there is another protocol which is a special protocol, that special preferential protocol began in 1995. When there is a failure to meet quotas under the sugar protocol, there is no automatic right for that quota to be accredited to another CARICOM State. Under the special preferential regime, the one which was implemented in 1995 with the European Union, it goes automatically within the region.

Now an academic question arises. To what extent does this differential in treatment consistent with the World Trade Organisation context in which we are recognised by the World Trade Organisation, to all extent and purposes - even though they have not officially done so - we are treated as a customs union, a region working together as one economic space. Therefore, for argument sake, if Barbados loses its sugar protocol, should it not then go to Belize or Guyana?

The question that the Honourable Member raised was, to what extent are we academically in a position to make the relevant contribution to shaping international trade law? I believe that is where the Honourable Member for St. Philip West was going. I fully appreciate the long-term significance of the point that he is raising.

It would seem to me that it would be perfectly plausible for the Caribbean to argue and for us here to take leadership. I used this as an example as how I personally believe and I hold firmly to the view that foreign policy has now to be about how we re-engineer the region to suit our interest.

The fact of the matter is that there are new entrants into the African, Caribbean and Pacific European Union partnership. There are places like Kenya, Mozambique and Sudan that have zero quotas and if we are failing to meet a quota, for example, here in Barbados, and we were to lose that quota, is it not in our long-term economic interest to ensure that a trading partner within this region gets that quota? That is a question we would have to look at very carefully.

It is a significant academic trade law issue which will have to be argued on because I think that we could make a claim under the World Trade Organisation for that type of treatment. The fact of the matter is that, again, it only further exemplifies the importance of the education budget.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West also spoke to the question of CARICOM administration. CARICOM administration, technical corporation and enhanced functional cooperation, at the end of the day it all comes down to the issue of how we govern the Caribbean Single Market and Economy process.

Sir, I am one who is of the view that we have a lot to learn from Europe. I genuinely believe that Europe took 50 years to bring itself to where it is today, so they have had more experience and time than we have given ourselves. However, Europe has 15 States and 376 million people and they have done it successfully. We have to look at the super national institutions that they were prepared to implement, for example, their Court of Justice.

We speak in this region of a Court of Justice, yet, we also hamstring ourselves. We tie our hands behind our backs and say that we are not prepared to go further and that we would not deepen the process to the point where we have quasi political arrangements.

I am very glad that a Member of the Opposition has raised this point because I think that this is an argument in which Barbados as a whole must engage. To what extent is it in our political long-term interest to ensure that there is a deepening of the administrative process in CARICOM, so that it becomes more representative?

To what extent, for example, should this region have a Parliament which is directly elected by people or that there should be a special committee in this Parliament of Barbados that plays an advisory role to CARICOM? To what extent would that enhance transparency in the system? To what extent, for argument sake, should the private sector, labour and other NGOs form part of an economic council which would advise the Ministers of the region in a manner similar to what takes place in Europe?

I believe that once we start to engage on the question of the administration of CARICOM, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has done, we will realise that the whole question of compatibility of legislation and harmonising our laws, all of these processes will take us, I believe, inexorably along a path toward creating super national institutions, institutions that spawn the breadth of this region and take into consideration the question of greater accountability, transparency and involvement of the people.

Sir, I believe that I am seeing your signal and I will yield at this stage.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank all Honourable Members for their worthwhile contributions to this debate. I regret that we have not been able to cover as much ground as we would have liked to do but what happened here is that, second reading speeches went much further than we had all anticipated.

Sir, what is going to happen now is that if we want to try to touch as many Heads as we can, some debates would be truncated. Honourable Members have indicated their wish to the Leader of the Honourable House that we should move on with the Heads.

I wish that I could have spoken more voluminously to the foreign trade issues, but I am grateful that

Honourable Members have indicated where they wanted to go. It seemed to me that Honourable Members wanted to speak to Caribbean Single Market and Economy issues and I believe that in later debates there would be opportunity for that as well.

Sir, I got the impression, certainly by listening to the Leader of the Opposition and a few Members on This Side, that Honourable Members wanted to speak more to domestic trade than they were willing to speak to foreign trade. Let me give the assurance to the House there will be opportunities beyond this Estimates debate.

H25:

18.50 p.m.

Sequence 150

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, there is a Cabinet Sub-committee of all the Ministers whose portfolios touch on trade matters. Honourable Members need to be assured that there is no brief that informs our negotiations and that there is no agreement that Barbados would sign on to that does not pass through the very careful scrutiny of that Sub-Committee which then has to be endorsed by the Cabinet.

There is also going to be in this Parliament again a Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

I am delighted to hear Honourable Members volunteering themselves because in the last Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, I appreciated how difficult it was for people to make time but we

would have liked to have had far more meetings than we did, but Honourable Members just could not seem to make time for it.

That Committee was drawn from both sides of this House and the Other Place and with persons from the private sector, the university and the foreign relations society of the Barbados Community College. We are going to throw the net wide here as well. Bearing in mind how busy some people are, we are going to have to invite some people to have a different kind of membership in the Committee than formerly who would come to speak to specific issues, so there would be ample opportunity in the not too distant future as soon as we can ground this Committee for it to begin its work. There is a great backlog that I hope will bring members up-to-date.

Mr. Chairman, there is a host of public information which is going to arise out of the vote for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. The Honourable Member for St. James Central spoke to the creation of a public information website during the first quarter of the financial year and also made reference to the Public International Trade Reference Centre which is to be established.

There are going to be ongoing consultations with civil society and the private sector on a day-to-day basis. There will be a number of seminars which we will host during this coming financial year. One is on Barbados and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, another one on Barbados' involvement in the negotiations for regional economic partnership agreement with the European Union and the third is on the status of current multilateral trade negotiations. We are also planning to host at least two Town Hall meetings on Barbados' involvement in multilateral trade negotiations with special reference to the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the economic partnership agreement with the Europeans.

We are looking too, and I am insisting on this, Mr. Chairman, to host at least four half-day seminars for secondary schools, the Barbados Community College and the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic. The staff of the Foreign Trade Division is prepared to go out in response to calls. There is a limit to how much of that we can do because it is a very small staff and they are working around-the-clock, but we do want to be able to answer some of the requests of the various institutions to discuss multilateral trade issues of one kind or another.

There will be radio presentations, television presentations and a number of press releases from time to time. We are hoping this financial year, at last, to edit and to publish the Barbados 2002 World Trade Policy Review. It is planned also that there would be the publication of a number of brochures and booklets on Barbados and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, Barbados and the ACP/EU and specific WTO agreements and whatever issues we get a demand for from the private sector and the wider public and whatever issues are coming into high priority and into high focus during the financial year.

Mr. Chairman, I want to touch very briefly on some of the issues raised by Honourable Members. The Honourable Member for St. John - who is not in his seat and is very much in the habit of raising issues and then leaving the Floor - asked a question, but I do not know why he asked it because I made it clear that these issues concerning Haiti are delicate, volatile and evolving even as we speak and I am not prepared to preempt the Heads bearing in mind there are going to meet next week on this. To ask what steps are going to be taken by CARICOM re Haiti is really to invite me to just repeat what I said just now.

I am sorry that he seems to feel that there is a lack of involvement by the Haitians. I am sorry about it too. I wish there were more involvement, but I have to say that CARICOM has tried its best over the past several years. We have sent two special envoys, one in the person of Sir John Compton and more recently the Foreign Minister of St. Lucia who is presently the President of the United Nations General Assembly, as you know. They both went on three separate occasions.

We engaged together with the Organisation of American States, the officer of CARICOM who is in charge of foreign relations, Mr. Colin Grandison, who himself had a long sojourn in Haiti before he came to us in CARICOM.

Mr. Chairman, suffice it to say that the Heads will discuss this matter. The Haitians are well aware that as members of CARICOM they are governed by the Charter of Civil Society which is the benchmark that all of us who are members of CARICOM must live up to. At this point I am not prepared to go any further into that.

Honourable Members raised matters which spoke to the fisheries dispute and licences. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. James Central has responded more than adequately to those. The issue raised particularly by the Leader of the Opposition, relating to local manufacturing and other areas of domestic trade will best be responded to when we get to debate the Ministry of International Business, Commerce and Industry.

The concerns raised by Honourable Members on both sides speaking particularly to the relationship between Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the services that we sell to each other within CARICOM, tourism services and professional services have been taken.

Honourable Members can be assured that they are very much at the forefront of all discussions and negotiations. I was pleased to hear several interventions which spoke to the maritime delimitation. Several years ago when Barbados with a great deal of effort, sought to put before the United Nations a Resolution speaking to the Caribbean Sea as a special area - you have to understand the way in which the United Nations process works - we met much opposition particularly from countries who were part of other seas and there was a view that if you made a case for one sea, then every other small sea would want a case to be made for it. The reality, as far as I am concerned - and I have said this both in and out of Government, in my NGO life, it is something I have researched and spoken to - is that the Caribbean Sea is the most threatened Sea in the world.

House 25 Sequence 151

6:50 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

It is not an enclosed sea in the way that some others like to make the case for themselves but what is known as the Caribbean corridors is not well understood by people.

We know where the major oil producing countries of the world are located but I do not think that we sufficiently appreciate that some of the largest refineries of the world are in the Caribbean. We are exceedingly fortunate that Providence has arranged it so that we have never had a major oil spill like what has occurred in Alaska and in other parts of the world, but huge tankers ply our waters day and night in what is known as the Caribbean corridor.

They are doing certain damages. Some of them quite improperly and illegally wash their bilges out and that is doing environmental damage to our near shore waters and to the seabed life as well.

Sir, when Barbados sought to sponsor this Resolution several years ago and to get as much assistance for co-sponsorship of this Resolution as it could from within and without CARICOM, we had to then effect a certain compromise. What we did was to move and to amend the Resolution to a status as it is known today and over the past years I have spoken to it on many.

Mr. Chairman, the Caribbean Sea has a special area within the context of sustainable development and the way in which the United Nations (UN) system works, one takes whatever one could get people to agree to, then over time one then begins to build on it.

Sir, Honourable Members have begun to appreciate the importance of that UN Resolution now that we are dealing with these matters of maritime delimitation and of fisheries. The point has been made before and has been made today by the Honourable Member for St. James Central but it bears repeating.

In this Archipelago of Islands, all of us are going to be subjected to maritime delimitation exercises because of the closeness of our island chain to points where our proximity to the South American, Central American and the United States mainland because we are going right through to the Turks and Caicos and the Bahamas. I forget how many hundred islands there are in the Bahamas alone. Some of them are not viable entities but for maritime delimitation purposes like "Bird Island" as it is sometimes called, off Antigua and St. Kitts. Venezuela lays claim to Bird Island.

There is now argument whether or not it is an island because every day at high tide it disappears but it is important to Venezuela and we should take note of this. This is where their ambition for maritime ownership goes, as far North as Antigua and it is important to them as a maritime delimitation point.

Mr. Chairman, the way in which the delimitation would work is a complex issue but it is critical to us because the seas are the last frontier left on earth, beyond that it is only now space. Sir, we have not begun to exploit the seas in the way that we have exploited the earth. There is still more that we have to do in terms of terrestrial earth but for maritime earth for this planet... The point has been made that there is more to maritime as there is to terrestrial in terms of this planet.

Mr. Chairman, as much as we would wish some of those billions of dollars that are being spent and are proposed to be spent in respect of exploration, in respect of the damage that we are doing now to undermine the sustainability of this planet that we inhabit, the exploration in space and further afield is important because one day, as the Bible has pointed out to us, this earth that we know will disappear.

The scientists tell us that the sun is shrinking and so if we want to preserve the species of the

humankind, we would have to look to other planets, but that is millions and billions of human years away.

Sir, we have to look to this Sea which is so critical to our well-being. We live in it. We eat out of it. Tourism, which is the major sector in all of our economies... indeed, in some of our economies, it is the only sector. The Caribbean Sea is critical to our survival as a region and so this is not an issue for political partisanship.

Mr. Chairman, each country will obviously want to put its case. In fact, all of the Caribbean countries that are continental, Guyana, Suriname and Belize, have border problems, Guatemala with Belize; Venezuela with Guyana; Guyana with Suriname, and Venezuela with Suriname.

Sir, let us face that fact. Some of them go back to the mist of antiquity but in respect of our maritime borders and the exploitation of the Caribbean Sea which falls within our exclusive economic zone and the way in which we can, as we are seeking to do now with Guyana and hopefully with others who are close around us, including St. Vincent which is only 99 miles away, it is important what we are doing now because we are putting in place the basis on which generations long after we have gone, will have the possibility to exploit further and to survive.

Mr. Chairman, I am very grateful that Honourable Members are now beginning to have a larger and deeper appreciation of the importance of the Caribbean Sea as a special area within the context of sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman, during the course of the last two days, I have heard Honourable Members speaking to carrying capacity. The Right Honourable Prime Minister has spoken to Barbados' carrying capacity. The Honourable Member for Tourism has got to look to Barbados' carrying capacity. I am a former Minister of Tourism and I have a layman's notion of what our carrying capacity could be.

I might be incorrect but I think that 10 000 rooms could be our carrying capacity but already Barbados is a UN-designated water-scarce country, which is now inhibiting tourism capacity building. That is why it is so important that we look at the carrying capacity.

All of these things you might never have thought would have impinged on the work that we have to do in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, but they are key to it and are basic to the work which informs the portfolios of virtually every Honourable Member on this Front Bench.

Sir, the subject of water and energy are issues that should have been debated because these are the issues which will determine the quality of life for Barbadians in the immediate, the medium, and the longer term future. Therefore, as Parliamentarians at this time, we have a large responsibility to make the correct decisions and to put in place the correct policies because those who come after us will not forgive us if we get it wrong, especially on those things that are of the highest priority. These are the issues that have teased out only in this small debate that we have had on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Mr. Chairman, I want to promise Honourable Members, that in the past in an earlier administration, we had a fully-dressed debate on this Floor, exclusively on foreign policy and foreign affairs and I

would like to hope that we could do that again in this Parliament.

H:No. 25 (152)710 p.m.

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Continuation of Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

We put together a document and put resource material in the hands of Members so that they came into the debate well-informed. Mr. Speaker, this year all of our Heads of Missions will come home for consultation. The majority of them are new in their term of office and it is important that they have this consultation.

On that occasion, which we hope would be in August, I hope there would be an opportunity for an interface with Members of Parliament if they are desirous of it. Also, out of this vote for the first time, I am hoping to bring together the Honorary Consuls in CARICOM.

Sir, we have Honorary Consuls all over the world, some of whom have never visited Barbados. Nobody works harder than the Consul in Cyprus but we cannot always afford to bring them to Barbados. I hope the time would come that once a person is appointed as an honorary consul, that he would come to the capital city to be briefed. Certainly, I want to do this in respect of CARICOM.

There are a few CARICOM countries where we do not have an honorary consul and I am hoping to correct this before the end of this year. We have Honorary Consuls of long standing in The Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Antigua & Barbuda but there are some CARICOM countries where we need to put a consul in place.

The same criteria that informed our judgement when we put Ambassadors and other Heads of Missions in place, informs us with Honorary Consuls. We want people who can uplift the work we are doing in business of one kind or other.

Sir, these consuls are multi-skilled, multilingual and come with specialised interests which speak to the way in which they can help us. I am open to recommendation from both sides of the House as to persons who might be suitable and not unwilling to take the position.

Sir, more than one Honourable Member made reference to the use of former parliamentarians. We are opened to this idea because it is not new to us. A few years ago, when we lobbied across the world for Sir George Alleyne to be Director-General of the World Health Organisation, Mr. Brandford Taitt, a former Minister of long years standing of the Democratic Labour Party was brought on board with the team. This was the first time that this happened and I am opened to these matters. Sir, this is an area of governance where there is hardly a need for us to be partisan.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

Honourable Member, could you wind up, please?

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER:

Mr. Chairman, I am aware that I have gone past my time and I am grateful to Your Honour.

I beg to move that Head 32 stand part.

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY seconded by Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER, Mr. Chairman reported progress to His Honour, Mr. SPEAKER and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Thursday, March 18, 2004, at 2 o'clock.

I have indicated earlier in the week that Cabinet meets in the morning and as is normally the practice, we will sit late tomorrow so Honourable Members must come prepared to work late into the night. Lunch will be available at 12:30 p.m. so that Honourable Members can avail themselves of it before starting the debate.

The question that the House be adjourned until March 18, 2004 at 2:00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

Sequence 153

H25/19:18