
THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION OF 2003-2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 08, 2005.

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

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, G.C.M., B.A., Dip. Ed. (Speaker) His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J. P. (Deputy Speaker) Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon). Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, D.A., (Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade) Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C. Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C., J.P. (Minister of Labour and Social Security) Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Public Works) Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, (Chairman of Committees) Hon. H. F. LASHLEY, (Minister of Social Transformation) Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.) Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment) Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs), (Leader of the House) Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc., J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs) Hon. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport) Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M. Sc., M.Phil, J.P. (Minister of Energy and Public

Utilities) Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B. Sc., J.P. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports) Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P. (Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports) Mr. R. D. JONES, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Ed.), J.P. Dr. D. C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S. Mr. C. A. MASCOLL, B.Sc. (Econ.) (Hons.), M.A. (Public Finance), (Leader of the Opposition) Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C., (Minister of Industry and International Business) Mr. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B., (Hons.)

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, October 25, 2005.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, October 25, 2005, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to report to this Honourable House that I am in receipt from the Accountant-General of the Accounts and Statements for the months of June and July 2005.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr. SPEAKER: Message No. 1/2005 from His Excellency the Governor-General.

His Excellency the Governor-General

to

the Honourable the House of Assembly

His Excellency the Governor-General has the honour to inform The Honourable The House of Assembly that, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition under Section 3(1) of the Ombudsman Act, Cap. 8A, he preposes to re-appoint Cyril Courtenay Clarke, Esquire, to the Office of the Ombudsman established by section 2 of the said Act.

His Excellency further has the honour to seek the approval of The Honourable The House of Assembly for the proposed re-appointment pursuant to section 3(2) of the said Act.

C. Clifford Husbands

Governor-General

On the motion of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the

following Resolution was passed.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT a humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor-General approving the proposed re-appointment by His Excellency, on the recommendations of the Prime Minister, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, under Section 3(1) of the Ombudsman Act, Cap. 8A of Cyril Courtenay Clarke, Esquire, to the Office of the Ombudsman established by section 2 of the said Act.

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

PAPERS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following

1. Value Added Tax (Refund) (Old Harrisonian Society) Order, 2005.

2. Customs (Petroleum Products Bulk Storage) (Amendment) Regulations, 2005.

3. Annual Reports of the Barbados Agricultural Development and Management Corporation for the years 2001 and 2002.

4. Financial Statements of the Barbados Agricultural Development and Management Corporation for the years 2001 and 2002.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I am commanded to lay the following

1. Annual Report of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council for the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of the Architects Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2005.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the following Bills were read a first time:

1. Guarantee of Loans (Companies) (Amendment) Bill, 2005.

2. Architects Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2005.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of this day(s) Sitting.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

On the motion of Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, Order No. 13 was withdrawn from the Order Paper.

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

ORDER No. 12

RESOLUTION TO NOTE AND APPROVE PROTOCOL FIVE OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP, 2005-2007

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, when the history of this period of our national development is written, one thing which will distinguish Barbados from its peers as small developing open economies will be its capacity to use the process of social dialogue to address a number of development issues.

Indeed, that social dialogue has been formalised in a series of protocols going back to 1993.

House 81 Sequence 3

10:30 a.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, the nature of those protocols have evolved over time, to take account of the changing circumstances. Indeed, one great test of maturity was whether an instrument which was born out of necessity and in a time of great adversity, could have proven to be efficacious in addressing issues, in a time of prosperity and in the absence of immediate and pressing danger.

Mr. Speaker, as you would be aware, it is only but human for groups to band together or for individuals to band together in groups, to search for and to find common purpose when there is a common threat, as was the case in the early 1990s, with the threat of economic collapse for our country Barbados. However, it always proves to be more difficult for that sense of unity, purpose and cohesive action, to attend endeavours, when the sense of pressing danger has passed.

Sir, it is to the credit and maturity of the society as a whole and the leadership of the Social Partners, that, with just an economic instrument, they have been able to move from

the initial position for the stabilisation of prices and wages, to a situation where we now have a social compact, which sets up a framework for participatory democracy. Sir, the essential purpose of these protocols has been to provide for a process of consultation on major, social and economic policy matters.

Mr. Speaker, it is against that background and this spirit, that we have now reached the point where this Parliament is being asked to note and to approve Protocol Five of the Social Partnership. I must, at the outset, give credit to the other partners. Indeed, one of the interesting features of the success of this arrangement, has been the fact that, over the process of time, the private sector and the Trade Union Movement have evolved from being a collection of disparate organisations, to having a confederation, an umbrella structure, such that the groupings are able to isolate and remove any policy differences they may have amongst themselves, and just like a Government, to be able to speak with a single voice on major issues.

Mr. Speaker, as you would know, one of the great challenges which governments over the years have had, is sometimes trying to distinguish what is the real view of a given sector. For example, years ago and to some extent even now, if one were to speak to a private sector person on the future direction for the economy and what should be done, the answers would have been very different if one had spoken to those persons in the agriculture, hotel, manufacturing and retail sectors. Therefore, sometimes one would have had to ask the question, will the real private sector stand up.

Mr. Speaker, thankfully the seven private sector organisations have grouped together to form the Barbados Private Sector Association, which is now the body which is able to engage in serious dialogue with Government, and is

able to give us a clear perspective from the private sector. Sir, one of the challenges which that association faces, is the need for them to expand their membership base, because the number of businesses which are involved in the formula organisations of the private sector, in my estimation, is still relatively small as compared to the overall number of businesses that there are.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to our other partner, the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Association of Barbados (CTUSAB), there are, on the register of the Chief Labour Officer, over 25 trade unions which represent a range of interests, some great, some small.

The Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Association of Barbados (CTUSAB) comprises trade unions and 10 staff associations. That body has been able to lend coherence of voice to the deliberations of the Social Partners. Indeed, even within that grouping, it is also true to say that the bulk of trade union membership in Barbados is still concentrated in three unions, the Barbados Workers Union, the National Union of Public Workers and the Barbados Union of Teachers.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that our ability to use these Social Compacts to facilitate dialogue on major social and economic issues, has been positively influenced because we have these umbrella bodies representing the interest of workers and the private sector. Therefore, in that regard, I want to salute them and to note their contribution to this document, as this is not a Government document but one of the Social Partners.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that this Protocol Five, as with others, is built on a number of basic premises, one being mutual respect amongst the partners because consultation could not have been effective or possible without that feature. Indeed, there are

several countries in the world, including some in our region, which have been unable to establish anything close to Social Partnership, without the absence of dialogue and respect across the respective partners. That is one of the fundamental issues which we need to applaud and to celebrate.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that our success in this arrangement has come about because of our long history of political maturity where, over the years, we in Barbados are accustomed to practising democracy across society. In this regard, therefore, a healthy exchange of views or disagreements are not fatal to any relationship.

Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that there are those who criticised the concept of a Social Partnership because they believe that it would muzzle the Trade Union Movement and prevent members from being able to strike, to speak their minds, or to disagree with Government. Sir, the facts have shown otherwise. The facts have shown that nothing in these Social Partnership arrangements has, in anyway, constrained the ability of any partner, to act in his or her sectoral interest. What we have all agreed on is that, in all cases, we would be willing to subjugate our sectoral interest under the goal of the national good. Therefore, everyone would be free to speak. We would be free to disagree, as all of the existing channels for industrial actions would be very much opened.

Mr. Speaker, it is perhaps even contradictory because there are those on the other side of the argument who would criticise and ask why is there a Social Partnership and still we have strikes; maybe the Social Partnership is not working. Sir, again I make the point that while one of the objectives of the Social Partnership is to have stability included in the industrial sector, it is within the contemplation of this Partnership that individual rights, including

right to all trade union action, that the right of the private sector to agree or to dissent with Government are fully preserved in this arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, enshrined in these protocols has been our commitment to the time-honoured tradition of volunteerism in industrial relations, which is an important principle, on which I will make two comments. H:No81(4)1040 a.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, the critical importance of our partners speaking with one voice on key issues was brought to the fore recently. Mr. Speaker, by now you would have thought that there would have been no question in the mind of anybody about the provision in our Constitution for freedom of association. Sir, given the post-riot history of modern Barbados political parties and the unions were one and the same. Sir, certainly, the largest union in Barbados, the Barbados Workers Union was born out of the bosom of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, right across this region, trade unions and politicians have been on the same side of policy agenda and that is the empowerment of the disadvantaged in our society. Sir, progressive legislation was passed by this Parliament in the 1950s . . .

Mr. Speaker, in 2005, we thought that we would not have to take the opportunity to remind employers in Barbados that the rights of workers are not only fundamental but are inherent rights. Sir, recently we had a reminder, in the case of Brown Sugar Restaurant, that we still have to stick to the basics and that the fight is not over.

Mr. Speaker, as a Government we will not, now or ever, agree with any situation in which

the laws of the country are broken. Sir, apart from the legal aspect of it, the work that this Government has done in building a social partnership, in working with the unions and empowering them, on behalf of the workers of Barbados, with a greater voice in making critical decisions in this country was sought to be overturned by an employer putting in the contract of employment of employees that:

(The company is non-unionised and by accepting this offer, you are waiving your right to join a union. Further it is a condition of your employment that you do not join a union for the purpose of representation in connection with your employment with the company or engage in any form of industrial action affecting the company. Any membership of a union will be a breach of this agreement.)

Mr. Speaker, those are not in keeping with the spirit or the letter of the Social Partnership and not in keeping with the legislation or the Constitution. Sir, the Fourth of February Accord was signed in 1998 and was an occasion on which employers, Government and the trade union movement had to say to Offshore Keyboarding that the question of the right of workers to join a union is not one for negotiation.

Mr. Speaker, it says to us that we will continue to have this clash of styles and cultures where some investors, particularly new ones are not in agreement with our voluntary approach to industrial relations and would want to impose on Barbados an industrial court legalistic type of arrangement, with respect to industrial arrangements. Of course, industrial relations and the framework within which those arrangements function will always have to be under review and to evolve. The reality is that investors have to work with what we have. Sir, the one part of that arrangement which is not negotiable is whether people have a right to join a trade union or not.

Mr. Speaker, even as we embark on Protocol V and as we note the successors of our partners, the unions and private sectors working with ourselves as Government have been able to achieve, we still need to recognise that this Protocol is not a sitting back and relaxing protocol. This is very much a signal to all concerned that these partners place the rights of our citizens at the pinnacle of any achievement. Mr. Speaker, no amount of economic achievement or social advancement would mean anything if we were to give away the rights of our people along the way.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make the point that we recognise the role of civil society in helping us to achieve the Social Partnership. Indeed, the church in the early 1990, had a strong and sober hand acting as a mediator to bring the private sector, unions and Government to the position where they were able to have the first protocol. Sir, those civil society partners are recognised and respected in this arrangement as well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that as we embark on this protocol, we have not moved away from those fundamental points but have sought to add, to strengthen and to improve and to address in each and every protocol the new challenges of the day so that Protocol V is different from Protocol I because we are in different circumstances. Sir, there is nothing wrong with Protocol I because it addressed what it had to at that point in time.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that one of the other issues which recognised is that this Protocol I which had a very limited utility - wages freeze and stabilisation of the economy - and that we could put this instrument to greater and more productive use. Therefore, Protocol II spoke to the issue of wage restraints, productivity enhancement and set out clear roles for the National Productivity Council, which is

functioning to the credit of Barbados, and took the relationship of our Social Partnership to a much higher level.

Mr. Speaker, the process of evolution continued with Protocol III in which we expanded the objectives to look in some detail at issues relating to social aspects of our development. I am giving this brief background to show how the document has moved from merely being an economic policy instrument to being an instrument which has affected our governance.

H81/10:50

Sequence 5

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation Hon. R.R. FARLEY:...

Sir, we made the determination for a vibrant participatory democracy, it became no longer a matter of going to the polls, and winning an election, without involving anyone. In all aspects of the governance of this country, this administration has used the Social Partnership and other mechanisms for dialogue.

Sir, for example, you will recall that under the umbrella of the Social Partnership, there was national consultation on the economy over the last several years. Sir, provision is made for that under Protocol Five as well. Among some of the important issues - this is not a light issue - in that first year 2000 of the National Consultation of the Economy, we looked at the impact of the international environment on Barbados, especially the sections of agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. We looked at the threat of OECD and the harmful tax report on the promises for the international business sector. Mr. Speaker, we also looked at public sector and private sector reform. We

also focused as a social partnership on issues of tax reform.

Sir, this Protocol is no paper tiger. This is a framework that formalises real action on the ground. Sir, Protocol Five and the others before it have been lived experiences.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001, two consultations were done, the regular consultation in May, which allowed us a complete review of the international environment. As you will recall there were signals of a downturn in the international and domestic economy. There were also the emerging trade agenda, the World Trade Organisation and its implications; the Free Trade Areas of the Americas, under consideration at the time; and the restructuring of the productive sectors.

Sir, perhaps, the Social Partnership had one of its finest moments in September 2001, after the calamity of September 11th, when there was great uncertainty. The only certainty was that the terrorist attack on the United States of America, were going to have negative and profound effect on the world economy and on our own prospects.

Mr. Speaker, in less than a month we were able to bring together the private sector, trade unions, civil society and the Government on September 28th at Sherebourne, to respond to that new development, because clearly, given that the fundamentals had changed, we had to revisit our economic proposals. Sir, already, there was the very clear and strong signal that based on Resolutions 1371 and others, we would have to change legislation relating to security, and terrorism. We had to take stock of where we were at the time and where we were proposing to go.

Sir, we continued with those consultations. In October 2005, we consulted on a wide range of issues, ranging from the impact of HIV/AIDS

on our society and economy, labour flexibility, export promotion thrust, trade liberalisation, capital market liberalisation and the impact of oil prices on the economy. Sir, this is a lived experience, very broad and very rich.

Mr. Speaker, one of the features in Protocol Five has been a commitment to a programme of action, building on our successes. For example, we have agreed in this Protocol to create a secretariat for the social partners. Indeed, in anticipation of the formal creation of a secretariat, which is functioning, a line item of expenditure was included in the Estimates of Expenditure of this Parliament for the current financial year, under the Head of the Prime Minister(s) Office.

Sir, we recognise that notwithstanding the success of the previous arrangements, one of weaknesses was the lack of a mechanism for full-time follow through. It was largely left to the Chairman of the Subcommittee of Social Partners and others to undertake the follow-through required. We have also underpinned the work of the social partners with additional organisational support.

Sir, we recognised in our deliberations, whether at the national consultation on the economy or otherwise, there is need for very clear information for certainty and predictability. We established under this tripartite arrangement, the centre for policy studies. That centre for policy studies, which is housed under the National Productivity Council, has its work programme directed by the social partners, all of whom submit areas which they want to have researched to inform their decisions. Again, we have provided \$250 000 a year for that.

Sir, so far, work has been commissioned and is very much in progress on things such as a productivity pay system for the hotel sector, at the request of one of the partners; worker

participation and negotiation flexibility, financial services liberalisation and the impact of capital markets development.

Mr. Speaker, from a practical point of view, to give further impetus to the general principles and desires expressed in Protocol Five and others, the support is there. I also draw your attention to the National Initiative for Service Excellence(NISE) which is one of the indicatives of the Sub Committee of the Social Partnership.

Indeed, there is a Board of National Initiative for Service Excellence, which is Chaired by the former Principal of the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus, Sir Keith Hunte. That Board, in the first instance, has identified and appointed a Chief Executive Officer for the National Initiative for Service Excellence. It is intended that the initiative of the social partners to boost service excellence across this country, will allow us to have both the economic and social benefit of enhanced service excellence.

Sir, I must say that initiative builds on a great idea which was developed out of the Barbados Workers Union. I believe that the gentleman, Mr. John Agard, a worker at the Port, who had proposed a week of excellence, which started approximately four years ago, because it was recognised by the workers of this country that excellence had to be the hallmark of all that we did. Not only in the international aspects of our economy, but excellence in our social relations, tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and service sector.

Sir, that week of excellence which will continue to be a feature of the wider National Initiative for Service Excellence, is again one of the manifestations and great examples of how purposeful social dialogue can be transformed, in the public policy. Sir, this country is reaping the benefits.

H81: 11.00 a.m. Sequence 6 Tuesday, November 08, 2005 House 81, sequence 07, 11:00 a.m. Continuation of Hon. R.R. FARLEY: I must tell you, Sir, that the NISE Committee of the social partners meets on a weekly basis. There are representatives from workers, employers and the Government to flesh out the strategy and to implement the programme. I must also say that this NISE initiative, like other aspects of the Social Partners had, ITS genesis and its relevance long before Cricket World Cup 2007. This is not one of those World Cup initiatives. It happened, Sir, that it fits well in terms of its capacity to give us benefits at a time when we will be exposed to the scrutiny of the world. I make no apologies for the fact that if we are able to achieve our objectives of enhanced service excellence at a time when we are exposed to the world, then there is a double benefit but it is really intended to have a deep long-lasting and most powerful effect. I make reference to the fact as well, Sir, that under the Social partnership, we have been able to give effect to some of the sentiments we expressed. For example, mention was made in Protocol Four and Five, of the commitment to protection of our consumers. You will recall that it has been this Parliament at the urging of this administration which, for the first time in our history, has put in place a very strong regime of consumer protection. For the first time, Sir, there is a Consumer Protection Act. There is also a Consumer Guarantees Act. There is a Fair Trading Commission. There is the Office of People(s	Council, an Attorney-at-Law hired by the Government whose job it is to work for the people, to defend and protect their interest. Those ideas were first muted as part of this social partnership and given effect through the Government as one of the partners. We also have made certain commitments both as the Government as administrator employer. The evidence of success is clear and the evidence of the Government(s clear commitment to its promises is also clear. Let us not forget that one of the great differences between where we are now and where we were in the first Protocol, is that as the time when the first Protocol was signed, unemployment was up to 23 per cent. We are now down to single digits and unemployment rates lower than those in Germany. This can be attributed in large measure to the very focused commitment of all partners to the commitment we made to reduce unemployment. Indeed, Sir, not only have we reduced unemployment but we also made commitments, and the commitments remain, Sir, towards strengthening workers(security of tenure. It has been this administration as employer, which made the bold step, not to lay-off people. We have not only expanded governmental employment up to 2 800 persons but one of the first acts of this administration was to bring legislation to ensure that the pay of Government workers could not be cut. Further, Sir, we determined that we could not be in a Protocol speaking to security of tenure and enhancing the position of workers without addressing our own employment and the conversion of 4 000 casual workers to permanent workers. Again, this is a major act of good faith in this Protocol. People, who for 30 years were working for the Government could be sent home by the Permanent Secretary) with a day(s notice. They could not take a letter from their employer of 30 years,
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that would meet the satisfaction of the bank to get a loan because the bank would say that, yes, you were working there for 30 years but there was no permanence.

Sir, they could get the loan today and, with one day(s) notice, tomorrow, they could go (through the eddoes/, but this is not so anymore. Our workers are now able with their appointments to have a certainty of future and to participate in the financial sector like the rest of us, to be able to take a letter to the bank or the credit union to indicate that they are appointed Government employees.

Sir, even little things like getting a visa to go to the United States of America to see their daughter or the grandchild that was born over there that they have not seen, those important bonding and family situations, those workers were denied because they were not in a secure position. This, Sir, has been a tremendous act of good faith.

Sir, we also augmented pension arrangements because those casual employees would have been disadvantaged with respect to pension but by the act of becoming permanent, their pension arrangements are now greatly enhanced.

There are a number of other benefits, which we can note. We can note as well that while Protocol One spoke in terms of a wage freeze that none of the other Protocols have spoken in those terms. Indeed, Sir, there have been wage increases in every collective bargaining agreement since 1995, from Protocol Two and beyond. Sir, that is the Government as an employer.

Within the Protocol as well, we recognise that we needed to create something which would be in the order of a code of conduct, a charter on industrial relations, to buttress the historical conventions, which have been used in

industrial relations. You will find that this Protocol Five and certainly Protocol Four would have also sought to set out, in fairly clear terms, what were some of the features relating to security of tenure in the private sector. Sir, private sector partners as well were required to commit to abiding by these codes of practice, which helped to move towards some level of codification of what was already generally understood.

It speaks therefore, Sir, to an entire section on employment, where the partners commit themselves not only to further reducing unemployment, and enhancing security of tenure but they speak to the way that we need to do things. Sir, there is then a situation in which for economical, technological or structural reasons, a company needs to restructure.

You will find therefore that these Protocols have removed the spectre of companies waking up one morning and saying that they will lay-off workers.

House 81, sequence 07, 11:1003

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Indeed, the Social Partnership has recognised that from time to time there would be lay offs. If you are making wheels and wheels are no longer part of the current technology, well then obviously business is going to be impacted. However, in those cases there are requirements concerning the length of notice, concerning the requirements for formal discussions with the union representing the workers and for formal presentation to be made to the Subcommittee of Social Partners.

Sir, what usually happens in those cases is that base on the discussions, we are often able

either to avert the lay offs altogether or to reduce them as well as to make sure that there is a clear programme for support whether it be by way of retraining or otherwise for those persons who are impacted by the change. Sir, very often they are able to be absorbed in other aspects of the company(s) operation.

Therefore, this Protocol Five that we are coming with, is continuing on from a period where the structures, mechanisms and agreements that we have created in the early years of the Protocol have continued to evolve and have been further strengthened. For example, in Protocol Five an explicit level of support is expressed for things like the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, because we felt that a protocol on the Social Partnership, which has objectives..., I do not have to recite them for you because they are there in the Addendum, one of which encompasses the further positioning of the Barbados economy to make it competitive and to build a fully developed society in which all are afforded the opportunity to secure a high standard of living. Another objective is the reduction of social disparities through enhanced employment and provision of opportunities for the disadvantaged.

Sir, another objective is the commitment to increase competitiveness through improved productivity and efficiency in the workplace. A further one, expressed directly in Protocol Five, is the maintenance of an industrial relations environment, conducive to the continuation of stable industrial relations and of course the continuation and the deepening of tripartite consultation.

Mr. Speaker, support for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy recognises that all of our relations as Social Partners will be affected by this new reality. Sir, included in this Protocol also is specific reference to migrant workers and support for the precept of

the free movement of Caribbean workers subject of course to agreements in CARICOM in terms of categories, numbers and so on. It also recognises that those Caribbean workers, like ours, who go elsewhere as workers, must be entitled to the same protection that we would expect our Barbadian workers to have.

Sir, this Protocol speaks out explicitly against the abuse and rabid exploitation of migrant workers, the situations in which people hold their passports purporting to be working on immigration matters for them but in truth and in fact have them in a form of servitude and indentureship, which might only have a 17th Century or 18th Century equivalent. Sir, that is not what we support by way of free movement of persons.

Sir, the Social Partners do not support the situation in which persons, put in that kind of vulnerability because of immigration status, are paid low wages because that has a dampening effect on the wage structure in the local market. Sir, those are some of the things that are spoken out against in this particular Protocol.

Sir, the Protocol, on the economic side, explicitly supports the 100% Bajan campaign, employers, Government and workers, because we recognise that in an era of free choice that the stability and the prosperity of our domestic economy depend on our willingness to make a choice for Barbadian goods and services as a deliberate action without having to resort to trade measures, which are no longer available to us, to explicitly ban our goods.

Sir, this Protocol also provides explicit support for the efforts of our country in the hosting of Cricket World Cup 2007, because the partners recognise that this is not a mere sporting event or an event put on by the BCA, World Cup Barbados or the West Indies Cricket Board, but that it represents an opportunity for our country to showcase its

excellence and to sell its good and services, its tourism services, its food, its beverages, its craft and its other manufactured products, that all involved, business persons, workers and everyone, will stand to benefit.

Sir, through the mechanism of the Subcommittee of the Social Partners, which meets on a monthly basis, we have been taking regular reports and have met with World Cup Barbados, to make sure that matters relating to their operation of this event do not pose any problem for any department. The Subcommittee would also ensure that Barbadian business enterprises are given a fair shot at contracts which are available and that on the industrial relations side there is no reason, cause, justification or provocation for any industrial action, which would cause a delay in the execution of the works, but in the process that all concerned takes step to protect workers interest and workers(rights even as we pursue the broader national objective.

Further, this Protocol takes account of a number of other initiatives happening in the wider economy and society. There is support for the vision and the objectives inherent in the National Strategic Plan up to the year 2025, because the Social Partners were involved in the various consultations leading to the development of that plan. Sir, I would not go into that now because that is a matter which is on our Order Paper and I know the rule of anticipation, but I would speak more to that when we do in fact debate the Resolution with respect to the National Strategic Plan.

Sir, I give these examples to say that this Protocol is not cast in a vacuum and that it is also not just about industrial relations, although that is the aspect which people tend to gravitate towards. This Protocol recognises that if the partnership and its institutions are to be a viable and practical mechanism for consultation on economic and social policy matters of a major

nature, that we must speak to the realities in which we operate. It therefore would not surprise you, Sir, that in this new Protocol, the Social Partners, recognising the critical importance of our natural environment have made certain commitments there as well.

House 81 Sequence 8

11:20 a.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Mr. Speaker, this is of particular importance because of the whole spectre of illegal dumping, which not only has a strong individual component, but also a private sector component - because by and large, there are a number of commercial items which find their way into some of these illegal dumps. The issue of where persons build or propose to build, the disposal of chemical and other hazardous waste, are not things that are governmental alone and neither is it for Government to be taking a watchdog approach only. Therefore, we recognise that as part of the sustainable development of our country, these issues have to be included as up-front commitments on the part of all of our partners, if we are to have the kind of society which we propose to have.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that once again the Protocol embraces the whole issue of the need for employers to have a comprehensive system of relations at the enterprise level, including not just the direct industrial relations component but also things which will touch us and have touched some employment situations.

Sir, the Barbados Employers Confederation and the Barbados Workers Union had sometime ago developed a protocol on HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses

in the workplace. That has been incorporated and adopted into Protocol Four and Protocol Five because we recognised that we cannot leave to chance the way that this matter is being handled. Sir, we recognised that issues of dignity and confidentiality are very important commitments.

Mr. Speaker, it is the view of the Social Partners that we need to ensure that given the health profile of our population, whether it is HIV/AIDS or cancer, that people must be treated with dignity and respect and that they must not be discriminated against. It is also the view of the Social Partners that people are given the opportunity to continue to earn to their fullest economic potential and in accordance with their health status. Again, we believe these are issues about which we need to be proactive and not reactive. Therefore, we have put the issue of health and safety in its widest context in this protocol.

Mr. Speaker, indeed the issue of Occupational Health and Safety is very much referenced in this Protocol. I know that in this Session of Parliament, the Honourable Member for St. James North, has done considerable work in passing Occupational Health and Safety legislation. In fact, before we did that, the only labour legislation that related to Occupational Health and Safety was the Factories Act. That Act limited its focus only to those workplaces that were defined as factories. On the other hand, this Occupational Health and Safety legislation encompasses all workplaces and recognises a new and wide range of workplace challenges, ranging from the ergonomics, with respect to the use of Information Technology, the issue of slipping on floors, lighting, temperature, et cetera. Sir, those are realities which we have to face. There are challenges both in Government and in the private sector in that regard and certainly from Government(s) side, we are working on ours.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of health and safety in its widest manifestation, forms part of the principal concern. Therefore, commitments have been made in this Protocol by the various partners concerning how we would seek to address those issues.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that this Protocol recognises that there is more to life than work. Therefore, the issues which are to be the subject of the consultation amongst the partners, are not restricted to workplace issues alone. Indeed, it is explicitly stated that the Social Partnership may consult on any matters that affect their general livelihood. Sir, therefore, recognising that we cannot include everything in this Protocol, this is where the mechanisms of the Social Partnership come into play. There is provision for there to be a meeting of the full body of Social Partners, to be chaired by the Prime Minister. There is also mechanism for monthly meetings. We do have our monthly meetings chaired by the Subcommittee of the Social Partners, a duty which falls on me as Chairman to execute.

Mr. Speaker, I can say that over the eight years of executing that task, that Subcommittee has truly functioned according to the mandate that was given it, that is to be the first line of consultation on any matter of social or economic policy interest to any of its members.

Additional duties have been placed on it from time to time. For example, while this Protocol and while the functioning of Subcommittee does not intend to, nor is it intended, in anyway, to trample on the legal authority and the traditions of the Labour Department, the provision is made that, over and above that, parties can call on the good offices of the Subcommittee, if they believe that it would help to resolve industrial relation matters.

Mr. Speaker, I want it to be very clear that nothing in this Protocol or in any of the other

Protocols have put us in a position where we are preventing the Labour Department from getting on with its job. In fact, I believe there have been a number of occasions in which the Subcommittee was asked to mediate sometime ago in 1998, when there was a threatened strike in the hotel sector on Old Year(s) Night. Sir, there was a strike looming and the parties called on the office of the Subcommittee to act as mediator. At that time, we met at Government Headquarters around 9:00 p.m. and left with a settlement at 5:00 a.m. the following day.

Mr. Speaker, that was one occasion on which we had to mediate but I think in most cases, with respect to industrial relations matters, the Subcommittee usually intervenes at an earlier stage, mainly to get the parties to go back to the bipartite level, that is for the trade union and the employer to get back to the bargaining table, whether on their own or under the guidance of the Chief Labour Officer.

Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that this Protocol represents not just the intention of the partners to consult and to work together, pursuant to objectives in relation to national development, but that it provides a framework, mechanisms or institutional structure and specific supports, to help the process along the way. Therefore, the Secretariat which is now staffed, where they are working on the corporate identity information such as its own logo, website and other supports, which will be developed to give the Social Partnership an identity.

Sir, we are in this exercise for the long run. There must be no turning back for this country with respect to the Social Partnership. Our commitment is to strengthen it and to have it properly enshrined in our laws, as part of our governance arrangements.

H:No81(9)1130 a.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Sir, I make the point again that this is not just an industrial relation mechanism. This is a reform of governance and participatory democracy at its best.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things which keep us busy are visits from persons all over the world checking to see what is it that we do and how we do it. We have even had the IMF coming to the last National consultation on the Economy to see how such a thing is done in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I am presenting this Protocol in its wide context as an instrument of governance. I am sure that members would give it their full and widest possible support. The mechanism is one which this House is already familiar with. The document has already been signed by representatives of the three partners. On this occasion it was signed on May 2, 2005, as part of the May Day arrangement at Browne's Beach, Bay Street. It is now before us for noting and approval. I trust that this Parliament would be so minded to give it full and enthusiastic support, as it has done with these Protocols so far.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Social Partnership look forward to utilising this instrument over the two-year period of its life and look forward to successfully completing that term and hopefully drafting Protocol X1 on the Social Partnership.

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

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that, Sir, and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I just listened to the Honourable Member for Christ Church East for well over one hour and I am no more informed on what the Social Partnership signed for April 1, 2005 to the March 31, 2007, intends to be or pretends be. What is important is that the original Protocol was grounded in an Incomes and Prices policy and the intention was to deal with the economic circumstances of the day. Sir, after 14 years, one would conclude that the Incomes Protocol at the time did what it was intended to do.

Mr. Speaker, it is still the case that even though we have now packaged the Protocol to call it a Social Partnership that there are two fundamental principles that undergird the intent of the partnership, one is wage restraint and the other is productivity enhancement. Sir, I wish to tell the Government and the people of Barbados that since Protocol V was signed that the economic circumstances in Barbados have changed pretty dramatically. In fact, only last year in projecting what would happen in 2005, we were expecting low inflation in Barbados, that there would be high gross domestic product growth and that it would be driven by tourism. Mr. Speaker, we also expected that there would have been a build-up in our foreign reserves for 2005. Sir, quite the contrary has happened and this is where I wish to speak directly to the Social Partnership.

Mr. Speaker, the expected rate of inflation in Barbados will be in excess of 6 per cent for 2005. Therefore, it should be the position of the unions in any negotiation whether with the private sector or the public sector that a standard rate of increase across the board cannot be permitted in an environment of high inflation. I am calling on the unions once again to go back to the bargaining table and ask for a two-tier system of wage increases where persons at the bottom of the income ladder

would get a higher percentage increase than persons at the top of the income ladder. If you are in a low-inflationary environment, you may be able to justify a standard increase across the board but once prices start to gallop the way in which they have galloped in Barbados over the last year and a half, there cannot be any fairness or justice to having a standard percentage increase across the board.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I reiterate my call in the prevailing circumstances for workers, especially low-income workers to get a substantially higher percentage increase than those at the top. It must be an increase that covers inflation. In fact, the Government of Barbados indicated in its last agreement that once the inflation rate exceeded five per cent that there would be an automatic trigger to increase the overall public sector wages. Sir, apparently that has not been implemented and, as was stated recently, it is up for negotiation.

Mr. Speaker, in any such Social Partnership all three partners should benefit but over the last 14 years, the Government has increased its revenue take from just over \$1 billion to over \$2 billion. Over the last 14 years, the profitability of the private sector has increased but over the last 14 years, the workers in Barbados cannot say that they have enjoyed a substantial increase in wages to exceed the growth of prices that they have to confront at the supermarkets.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting that it is now the opportunity for workers in Barbados to get increases which are commensurate with the actual growth of prices. Let me say, therefore, that the industrial relation climate in spite of the signing of Protocols, has not been a very calm climate. In fact, there are several instances which I can quote over the last two and a half years where there has been significant industrial unrest in Barbados when compared to the previous ten

years.

Mr. Speaker, we have had in the public service in Barbados a number of work stoppages, at the Audit Department for a sick building. We have had at the Customs and Excise Department, issues pertaining to security cameras and lack of communication giving rise to unrest at the Customs and Excise Department. We have had at public markets in Barbados under the Government, issues of supersession where younger workers have superseded more experienced persons and caused discussion within this country with respect to the overall nature of the Social Partnership and whether or not it is redounding to the benefit of the average public sector worker.

H81/11:40

Sequence 10

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Speaker, we have had supersession at the Meteorological Office in Barbados over the last two-and-a-half years. I am therefore suggesting that in spite of the increasing size of the social partnership, the industrial climate in Barbados has not improved, commensurate with the growth of the Protocol. In fact, the Protocol is now exceeding seventy pages. This is fearful because the thickness of the agreement does not in any way bear relation to the effectiveness of the agreement. Therefore, Government has to be careful in attempting to package something called a social partnership that it is not trying to achieve too much, and as a result achieve less because of the significant number of objectives that have been identified within the Statement of Intent and Preamble to the Social Partnership.

Sir, the question of industrial relation environment was also evident at the National Petroleum Corporation, another Government entity, in which there were calls of unfair dismissals, notwithstanding the signing of a Protocol. We had unrest at the Registration Department, sick building syndrome. There were discussions about supersession at the School Meals Department. Again, notwithstanding the signing of a Protocol, there were all kinds of discussion with respect to supersession. Sir, at the Grantley Adams International Airport there were discussions about the appointment of casual workers. Sir, whether or not with the changing over to a corporation, there must be security of tenure for workers at that airport.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak to you, having

already signed the Protocol, there are concerns of the (red caps(at the Grantley Adams International Airport, with no bathroom of their own. They have to seek permission to use the public bathroom, which is located next to the conveyor belt. Sir, in spite of a Protocol there are several instances across the public sector of Barbados where (red caps(at the airport cannot take a moment of pleasure away from the work environment without having to seek the permission of a supervisor.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told that by the (red caps(and they have informed me recently that is so. In fact, that entire arrangement needs to be reviewed. I do not understand why a worker should have to pay any one to work as a (red cap(in Barbados, when the person who receives such funds is not passing those monies to Government. It has been stated in here before that individual responsible for the Red Caps owes Government hundreds of thousands of dollars. Every month a (red cap(, in order to work at the airport, pays an individual who provides him no service at all during that

month, but receives substantial funds which are not passed on to Government. It is an arrangement that must be investigated. It is an arrangement that requires investigation because it cannot be justified.

Sir, I know Governments like to have opportunities to provide for persons who have been supporters. Governments prefer a position where they can provide an opportunity to an individual, but it is an injustice to pay someone to work for the (red cap), who provides absolutely no service for the said (red cap). Therefore, if it were put in place years ago, it is time for it to be revisited, because it is not fair.

In addition, we have had supersession at the National Housing Corporation. We had questionable appointments, notwithstanding the Protocol, at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. In fact, the most recent has relates to the Head of the Gynaecological and Obstetrics Department at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what makes this very important? It is really the first opportunity for the Board of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to use professional methods to appoint individuals, to posts at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. At this particular point in time we have an individual who is far less competent, by all reports, who does not have the capacity medically, who has been given a position ahead of a Barbadian, by the way, who has demonstrated his ability at every level of his profession, both at the private and public level, who is a superior doctor medically, but not given an opportunity to head a department. That department is now headed by a non-Barbadian who does not retain the competence of the Barbadian.

Sir, if this is the result of moving the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to a Board, then we must wonder whether we are really enhancing productivity or we are offering opportunities to

people who deserve opportunities in Barbados and what will be the consequences of such actions for the public service of Barbados. It cannot be done that way.

Sir, we also have a situation where that institution is asked to raise revenue. It can only raise revenue on the basis of competence; if not, private competing hospitals will very soon take away any opportunity for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to earn additional revenue. If you can take those kinds of actions to appoint persons who are far less competent on the basis of whatever criteria you determined, then something is wrong. Sir, the individual, who became the Head of Gynaecology was given previous knowledge of the questions that would be asked and a period of time to prepare for the interview, but the Barbadian was given approximately fifteen hours notice, telling the Barbadian the evening before the interview that there would be an interview. However you allowed the individual, who has now been appointed, weeks to prepare for the interview, not only weeks to prepare, but the individual had the benefit of the kinds of questions that would be brought to the interview. This is really sad.

Sir, all of these Protocols really make no difference whatsoever, if that is the behaviour of a major institution, the behaviour of an institution that has been reformed, with the expectation that it could enhance its competitiveness and efficiency in a market that is becoming increasingly economic and not social, then it speaks volumes about the nature of these so-called Protocols and their intent.

Sir, the Sanitation Services Department has also been affected by supersession. We have spent lots of money at this department and cannot say that there has been an improvement in the delivery of service. This must be investigated. I do not intend to go into details. I do not get caught up with individuals, I speak

of the systems and the principles. I have to in order to demonstrate the principle. I did not identify any names. I am sorry that I could not use names but it is very obvious to all of whom I am speaking.

Sir, there is supersession at the Barbados Licensing Authority and the National Assistance Board. These are the issues that need to be addressed by any Protocol.

Asides

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: I am saying that these are the kinds of issues that need to be addressed by any Incomes Protocol. To come in here and give the impression that the signing of a social partnership would be a cure or the wherewithal for productivity enhancement, economic growth and other things as described in the Statement of Intent is to provide the wrong impression as to what is happening in Barbados.

We also had a situation in 2001 where a Qualification Order was passed. Again, I was attacked for speaking to the issue of academic achievement.

H 81: 11.50 a.m.

Sequence 11

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 12, 11:50 a.m.

Continuation of Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

I am not against anybody getting increases or improving their academia but I am saying that you cannot give a person who has only achieved two CXC's a preference over someone who has been in a job for 25 years, as happened at the Fisheries Department, and then try to justify it because it cannot be fair. Therefore, I understand the importance of the Qualifications

Order but I also understand the importance of being able to do your job and do it well and it can only be done effectively by way of experience.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Sir, no such thing can happen. We have to respect that you are trying to increase the qualification of the public sector.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have to control yourself, please.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am very concerned about the overall level of insecurity that people have within the public service. I therefore have to speak to the matter but it does not end there. We were told in the last ten years that companies would have to become more competitive and improve their efficiency.

There have been mergers in Barbados. We have seen the coming together of CIBC and Barclays to form First Caribbean but it happened at a price, the loss of jobs. People were sacrificed in the process and there would be further sacrifices by the merger between CIBC and Barclays.

We saw the Mutual and the Life of Barbados becoming Sagicor. This was another merger in an attempt to enhance efficiency and competitiveness, and to compete regionally. We saw BET and BARTEL and Cable and Wireless merging to become Cable and Wireless but the thing about it, we were promised that companies would be established in order to absorb the workers who would be laid-off from these institutions because the whole question of competitiveness would provide an opportunity for others to be

established within the market and therefore there will be no impact on jobs. In fact, we were told that we should see an increase in jobs as the market becomes more competitive. This is what we were told by the Rt. Honourable Member for St. Peter. Do you know that has been happening? There have been further lay-offs at Cable and Wireless, and rather than increases in job opportunities, we have seen a reduction in job opportunities in the competitive environment.

Sir, what has happened is that the increased technology has in fact enhanced profitability. Companies have, within the last two years, become very large in the telecommunication market. It is amazing. Companies that you could never have anticipated to have done so well have been able to reap profits of magnificent returns. When you check the level of investment versus the rate of return on an investment, it has been successful for some in that market but you have not seen any commensurate benefit for the workers within the market.

We have seen the closing of hotels in Barbados, Sam Lord(s Castle and Rockley Resort over the last two and half years. These are two major hotels but the more important feature is that these hotels were regarded to be Barbadian in nature.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Sam Lord(s was owned by a Barbadian, but I am not sure about Rockley. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that now we no longer have that, so not only is there a dislocation but there is also a change of ownership. We are seeing certain companies emerging and being very large players in the Barbadian landscape to the extent that they are consolidating, not only in the insurance service delivery or the hotel sector but have even now expressed interest in becoming construction

magnets.

Therefore, you have to start to look at the implications for everything, jobs, security and ownership and see whether or not, we can safely pursue a democracy that is going to provide for increasing opportunities for our people. I cannot see any evidence of it, Mr. Speaker, because what you are really seeing is further consolidation of the wealth of Barbados into the hands of a few.

We saw the perfect example with the sale of BNB, which went against the core and stated objective and intention of liberalisation and the opportunity to give Barbadians a greater share in the economic pie. Sir, rather than to hold on to an institution that was profitable, we sold an institution that had the opportunity to be profitable but what is more important, we denied Barbadians the chance to get involved in the process of ownership, rather than just simply be workers.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: It is not true? Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is absolutely true because the company actually issued statements seeking to buy out other shareholders and succeeded in doing so. Sir, if the Government cannot set the lead by example, by holding on to its shares and impressing upon the people of Barbados that it is a good investment, why then would you expect the individual to do such? Why would you expect an individual not to sell a share when the Government has sold? The Government should have been setting the example with respect to the BNB. The sale of BNB gives the impression to other Barbadians that this is the opportunity for us to make a one-off profit, which it did because a share at the time only cost \$1.45 but was sold for \$3.80 and nobody has yet answered why it is that the buyer was able to buy a share for such a large difference but that is important. Mr. Speaker,

we then had the whole question of Geddes Grant.

Sir, we seem to be living not really in Barbados. We seem to be caught up now with just all kinds of public relations exercises, so the social partnership is impressive because it brings together the unions, the Government and private sector individuals who have now determined that such an arrangement is comforting because it gives a social aspect to the economic circumstances of Barbados. It makes it seem as though Barbados is so mature that the trade unions can now lie in bed with Government and the Government can now lie in bed with the private sector. Therefore, we have reached such a level of maturity that we can demonstrate to each and every country in the rest of the region and beyond that until you have reached this stage of maturity, where the competing forces in the economy can come together and form as one, you have not yet really come to being or come to grips with yourself.

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that you have to be very careful that you do not compromise the workers in this process. This is why I said at the outset of this speech that I am speaking to the trade unions not to accept an across-the-board percentage in wages.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Not this year. It cannot happen this year. It would be unfair, notwithstanding the fact, Mr. Speaker, that only over the last couple of weeks, the Permanent Secretaries of Barbados, those at the top of the ladder in the civil service received a 22.5 per cent increase. Therefore, if in spite of the Incomes Protocol and the Social Partnership, the top tier of the civil service could get a 22.5 per cent increase and it could be justified under an evaluation exercise, then I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that it would be totally unfair to

give such a person, the same 3 per cent or 5 per cent increase as an individual who is way down at the bottom, who is below the tax threshold and has not benefited from any such increase. It cannot be the case next time around, it would be grossly unfair.

House 81, sequence 12, 12:0014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Sir, that is the context in which I am seeking to guide this partnership away from all of the little contortions that they have engaged in order to justify a recent evaluation and all of the failures to speak directly to the issue by people who have in fact been preaching wage restraint from on high, but who have signed contracts to extend their tenure at the Central Bank, but having signed the contract, did not agree to a salary because they were awaiting the outcome of the evaluation exercise in the Public Service and now that it has been determined they have all kinds of space and leverage to move. They did not make a determination at the time of signing that they want a five or ten per cent increase, they waited until the outcome of the evaluation exercise in the Public Service to then determine what the Governor's salary at the Central Bank would be like.

I can speak to that, Mr. Speaker, because it is unfair to speak wage restraint in an environment in which prices have been increasing. It is unfair to speak wage restraint to an individual who has to buy food at the supermarket with prices galloping. It is unfair to speak wage restraint to an individual who has to pay more electricity cost and water increases. It is unfair to speak wage restraint to an individual who has to pay higher fuel cost and higher insurance cost for his home.

Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about a wage freeze, I am talking about a wage restraint. A wage restraint is different from a wage freeze. A wage freeze is actually a sticking of the wage. A wage restraint is negotiation within a particular range. Sir, that range cannot now be confined to two or three per cent when the inflation rate of Barbados will exceed six or seven per cent this year and will continue to grow next year.

Mr. Speaker, all I am saying to the unions of Barbados is that it is time to revisit what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy calls the two-sided triangle.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: He is never wrong. It takes time to recognise it, but he is never wrong.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, order.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: That is a genuine observation. It takes time. He is not straight, but he has an understanding of politics and understands the issues that affect and confront Barbadians.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, let me go on because this matter is extremely important. You cannot have a situation in which you are justifying not giving wage increases because of increasing tax allowances. You cannot have a situation in which you are preaching wage restraint because you are reducing the income tax rates. Mr. Speaker, persons who are below the threshold and persons who work for less than \$20 000 per year in Barbados now do not pay taxes, so adjustments to tax rates would not affect those

persons. What has to be recognised is that a Value Added Tax by nature is regressive. People have to eat and people have to spend and therefore when they spend they encounter the impact of the Value Added Tax.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, who introduced the bible? It is the interpretation and understanding of it that matters, it is not what has been introduced.

Mr. Speaker, I am therefore saying that in an environment where there is a Value Added Tax and in an environment where persons at the lower rung of the income ladder cannot be affected by tax adjustments or losses, then those individuals need to be compensated better than they have been compensated over the last ten years. It is a very simple principle. You simply cannot, and I have to repeat this throughout my speech, have a one-tier wage increase in an environment that is inflationary because an environment that is inflationary affects those at the bottom more than it affects those at the top.

Mr. Speaker, let me explain why that is so. A cow who earns substantial millions does not eat any more than a cow who earns only hundreds of dollars per month. Therefore, a person with low income eats out proportionately more of his income than a person who earns substantially. Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that there is no margin for savings. You have to increase your consumption once you are in the lower echelon of the income levels. Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: I do not know which colour cow. All I am saying is that a millionaire eats no more meat, rice or potato than a poor person. Therefore, a person at the

lower end of the ladder has to eat maybe all of his income out and hence there is no opportunity for savings. Therefore, when you seek to increase deposit rates under the guise that you are enhancing the savings opportunity of the average Barbadian, you are not doing that because the average Barbadian does not save. If a person is earning \$800 a month, what are they going to save out of it.

Mr. Speaker, it is not designed for the average Barbadian to save. Average Barbadians do not save that kind of way. It therefore means that the policies that have recently been introduced to give rise or to enhance the opportunities for Barbadians cannot impact on low income Barbadians. Tax reductions do not impact on low income Barbadians. Increasing saving rates do not impact on low income Barbadians. Therefore, I am suggesting that when you look at the reality of life in the last 11 years in Barbados that it is precisely the person at the lower end of the income ladder that has not benefited from any social partnership. It is the person at the lower end of the low income ladder that does not benefit from any incomes protocols. In fact, the same Honourable Member who presented this Resolution, and I heard him speaking in glowing terms about a research department which would be funded to the tune of \$250 000, was given the mandate to chair a committee to look at the impact of prices on Barbadians when the VAT was introduced, but he has never produced a report.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East has no idea as to how VAT has truly impacted on the average Barbadian.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: On a point of order.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House because he does not know what he is talking about. Within the ambit and the remit of the Subcommittee of Social Partners, it was agreed that a report on prices would be tabled every quarter. That report has consistently been delivered and if the Honourable Member had access to the Minutes of the Subcommittee of Social Partners he would realise that. Sir, that has continued over the years. There was no single point or single report to be produced by the Chairman or anybody else. Sir, the Honourable Member does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. SPEAKER: Move on, please.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I will confess... Sir, if the Honourable Member for Christ Church East actually produced the report and did not make it public, in whose interest was he writing or producing the report for? Sir, the thing about it is that I do not need a report because I can simply take up the Central Bank statistics and get an assessment of what, falsely, is the inflation rate because I do not believe it, let me declare my hand early.

House 81 Sequence 13

12:10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe what is being provided by the Central Bank of Barbados as the official statistics of Barbados, neither do I believe that there is reduction in employment in an economy, which is losing reserves, which is not growing, and in which there is high inflation.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe it. Are you, therefore, saying that the way to reduce

unemployment is to have low economic growth, lost in reserves, high-value inflation and generally to have problems in the economy? Are we, in fact, the more problems there are, the less unemployment there would be. That is what we are hearing. Sir, this was, in fact, for an economy, where tourism has not been doing well, where manufacturing has been in trouble, where the agricultural sector...

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. I am suggesting to you, to continue with the item before the House.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I have made up my mind to remain calm in the circumstances.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: I am referring to Page 3 of Protocol Five, the Statement of Intent

1.1(To create a modern, efficient economy which is able to produce high and sustainable economic growth, accompanied by increased employment and societal well-being(.

Mr. Speaker, if my assessment of the tourism, agriculture and the offshore sectors do not satisfy the objectives stated in the Statement of Intent, I do not know what will.

Mr. Speaker, let me move on to say that, in fact, the tourism sector was supposed to be the engine of growth but that it has slowed remarkably, so much so that we have not heard of any Press conferences from the Minister of Tourism and International Transport, with respect to the performance of the industry, a Minister who is under pressure in his own way.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the future, how could we enhance productivity in Barbados, in

an environment where prices are galloping? How do we give incentives to workers to cover the cost of inflation, to enhance efforts at the workplaces and consequently enhance productivity? Sir, it becomes an even bigger challenge in an inflationary environment, and we have failed. To this day, we have not been able to measure productivity.

We have also accepted rubbish out of the International Monetary Fund documents about productivity falling in Barbados, when there are no measures that can justify that productivity fall. What the International Monetary Fund did, was to take the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and divide it by the total employment figures and come up with a whole set of rubbish about productivity.

Mr. Speaker, productivity is a micro measure. It is managed on the job and at the firm level. One cannot take a macro statistic and divide it and say that Barbados has increased or has loss productivity. It is a macro measure and we have not yet reached that level. Therefore, until we do, we would have trouble.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, we have just put policies in place which go contrary to the attainment of productivity. We have made it more difficult for companies, even to use overdraft facilities, by increasing interest rates. Sir, this is not to curb or to penalise consumption, as it cannot do that, and the officials have now agreed that increasing interest rate on four separate occasions in the last year, cannot dampen consumption. Instead, it has increased the cost to business and will, therefore, compromise the ability of businessmen to compete, to make the sector more productive. Therefore, increasing interest rates go against the grain of rising productivity.

Mr. Speaker, when one analyses or assesses Government(s performance within the context of the Social Partnership... Sir, the others enjoy

it because this Social Partnership has more to do with drinking cocktails and being in particular social environments. This Social Partnership is not to do with who will form a vision or find a path for the best way forward for Barbados. It is what kind of friendship one makes or what kind of relationship one has within the social space of Barbados. It has to do with whose backs one can or cannot rub. Therefore, unless one is able to be part of the so-called Social Partnership, then the opportunities for one's advancement might be restricted. This Social Partnership is about opening doors and making it easier to get in. That is all it is.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: I am not sure but I know for sure that it has more to do with that than any real Social Partnership, designed to carry Barbados forward. Sir, when one looks at the contents of this document, one cannot be impressed about the signing of this declaration on May Day.

Sir, in addition to the National Initiative on Service Excellence (NISE), the thing that has to be the forerunner to NISE, is Public Sector Reform. This gives workers within the Public Sector greater opportunities to participate in carrying the country forward and in having an opportunity to earn more, by way of initiative and innovation. It is about being able to be more flexible within the market.

Sir, people like working in the Public Sector because it offers security but after a while, people become (fed up) with Public Sector jobs because there is no room for advancement, as persons are confined or restricted in their ability or in their capacity to reason. Persons are confined by a policy that comes from on high, a policy in which they are not able to share, although it might be a policy that contradicts the objectives of the department.

It might be a policy that cannot be attained within the restrictive nature of the department of Government, or it might be a policy that has no bearing whatsoever on the competencies of persons within the public service or that particular department. Therefore, until we can find a way to allow Public Sector workers to become part of the process of policy decision-making, there will not be any Public Sector Reform, neither would there be NISE.

Sir, one cannot take 28 000 people within a sector, deny them the opportunity to be a part of the process of carrying the country forward and then impose on them a policy in which they are not able to participate. That is what is wrong with the public service. Of course, there are very bright people within the Public Sector but they never get the opportunity to participate in policy decision-making.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak from personal experiences because I well recall the early 1990s, when individuals across the Inland Revenue Department, the Treasury and the Central Bank of Barbados, worked together to find solutions for problems that were identified by the IMF. Therefore, until we can get that kind of relationship operating within the institutions of Government, we are never, ever, going to get so-called Public Sector Reform.

H:No81(14)220 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation of Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Sir, I am not satisfy that this Social Partnership is going to make any difference to the economic achievements of Barbados because since it has been signed there has been a substantial change in the economic environment, the impact of oil prices on inflation; the impact of rising water rates,

which are yet to be analysed and assessed on rising prices in Barbados; the impact of inefficiencies within the transport sector that has not yet been addressed; the impact of rising interest costs on overall efficiencies within not only the private sector but also the public sector; the impact of policies that have not yet been fully analysed and, therefore, the belief is that the Social Partnership as defined in this document would be the wherewithal to all the economic and social problems in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of the social problems, until we understand the relationship between the abilities of Governments in the region to deliver social services and the economic constraints, we are never going to be able to solve the problems within the region.

Sir, therefore, I am concerned about the fact that health care is now being seen as more as an economic good than a social good.

I am increasingly concerned about how we view transport within the context of its ability to deliver to the least privilege in the society.

I am concerned about the way in which we are viewing education, which used to be the tool for upward mobility. We have now to be careful that it would not be denied to the majority of persons by way of charging fees that may be beyond the way of those individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about the overall changing nature of social goods and services that are now beginning to take on an economic characteristic that will see the ability to pay as the first and foremost principle in determining access by poor people. It was encouraging that the University of the West Indies could have identified scholarships for the indigenous people in the region and have been able to go to Dominica and find indigenous persons to get education at such a

high level.

Sir, I see an increasing tendency in the region towards making goods that originally within a democratic socialist principle were to be accessed by the poor and were treated strictly as social goods, being classified in alternative and different ways.

Mr. Speaker, for me, it constitutes the greatest challenge for any Government in the region. How can you continue to offer such social goods to the least privilege in the society? How can you continue to make accessible and affordable goods of that nature for persons who did not come from the higher income categories? How is a Government going to position itself to ensure, that notwithstanding the challenges the CSME, WTO - I am happy to see the delay and the apparent death of FTAA. Sir, for me, it is the beginning of change. Once we can get that happening, it is going to make governance in the region much easier.

Mr. Speaker, all these other institutions which have been formed to take away levels of sovereignty from Caribbean countries, once they are allowed to take root, they are going to further restrict the abilities of Government to deliver the kinds of social goods and services that we would like to see as democratic socialists.

I, therefore, was not unhappy at all to hear about the lack of advancement of the FTAA and I would like to see a similar thing happen with WTO. I have written on this when I had a column in the Business Authority and I am convinced that it is an experiment that would fail. Sir, for me this constitutes what will be our greatest challenge for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I have raised several concerns about the social partnership. I have identified the main areas of concern for the Democratic

Labour Party but I want to end on this note. Sir, no matter what you do with your Social Partnership, I am encouraging and inviting the trade unions not to give in to any negotiation that restricts wage increases to a one-tier wage increase for all Barbadians in this environment of high inflation, galloping prices and in this environment of uncertainty of jobs.

Therefore, I am saying that there has to be an amendment to the thinking that would have informed recent wage negotiations for the coming wage negotiation which is to be implemented by April 2006. Mr. Chairman, if that is not done, the average Barbadian is going to be even further away from those who have and the distribution of income would continue to worsen in an environment in which only those who own capital, land, real estate and property would continue to benefit in this country. The persons who work at the bottom end of the income ladder will not be part of the process of any growth, any enhancement of opportunity, will not get any greater access to land, housing, will not be able to own any business in Barbados, will not be shareholders of anything and, therefore, will be effectively excluded from a future Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, there need for a fair share for all in this country.

Sir, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 130 p.m.

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

The question that the House be suspended until 1:30 p.m. was put and resolved in the

affirmative without division and Mr. Speaker suspended the House accordingly.

H81/12:29

Sequence 15

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

RESUMPTION

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

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate, largely because I think that we are discussing a particular tool that has been used effectively since 1993, as a means of ensuring continued social and economic development of Barbados. In other words, the social tripartite agreement can be looked at as another macro-economic strategy to help promote social economic stability.

Mr. Speaker, given that in Barbados and throughout the region we have an incapacity to utilise effectively the commercial policy as a protectionist mechanism, it means that part of promoting social and economic development, the majority of that pressure has been placed on the use of fiscal and monetary policy to support your exchange rate position.

Interestingly, the rationale for the development of the social partnership agreement, having been born out of an environment where there were pressures on the exchange rate position of Barbados, clearly, underlie what I am talking about. Sir, because of that, a social partnership therefore cannot be a static entity. It must be an arrangement that must evolve and adapt to the social and economic conditions that will change from time

to time. As a result, when we look at the arrangements developed since 1993, we will see the evolution occurring from positions where we have moved from a wage freeze to a wage restraint situation, to an incomes position without a prices protocol. We are now at the stage where we are talking about linking income to productivity.

I think it is important for one to appreciate that this arrangement must necessarily evolve and adapt to different conditions, it means that the arrangement can be used either in an effective way or in a way where the arrangement does not have to be effective.

Sir, I believe that over the years in Barbados, the evidence is clear that the social partnership has in a lot of ways created some measure of social disharmony in Barbados. The concept of the arrangement in its raw term, I think I may need to explain this slowly, is as follows:

One of the reasons for instituting such a protocol would be to retard wages and to retard them in such a way that the slowing of a rise in wages is directly linked to the capacity of a business to produce and develop income. That is important because it gives a period of time for a business interest to be able to contain, probably, the largest input into its cost allocation. Therefore, it is designed to allow businesses to enhance their profit capacity and by doing so, it is designed to allow them to reinvest within the business so that they can produce a cheaper product of a higher quality and, therefore, a product that allows them to be more competitive on the local and international markets. That is the basis behind this practice.

H81: 13.40 p.m.

Sequence 16

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 17, 1:40 p.m.

Continuation of Dr. D.C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look over the last ten years and I start to analyse what happened in Barbados, I have difficulty accepting, after I read the Statement of Intent of the Protocol that we have in any way come close to achieving these particular statements. For example, it is said, and I refer to page 3 of the (Statement of Intent), that one of the fundamental positions of the social compact is to distribute the benefits of economic growth fairly and equitably. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has not happened in Barbados.

In fact, what has happened in Barbados over eleven years is that we have had significant growth of the business interest in Barbados. We have had not only significant profiteering in the business interest in Barbados but I can say without a doubt that we have not had a commensurate increase in the wages in Barbados that goes along with that increase in profit. Therefore, I cannot agree that we have achieved this particular stated intention of the social partnership.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to look at the other established statement that is to establish through low inflation, an equilibrium between prices and incomes. This has not occurred either. One would have to explain this by going back to the pre-VAT situation in Barbados and analyse that with the post-VAT situation in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, any individual who would have gone to the supermarket and who would have shopped in town at Courts, would have recognised that the only fundamental reduction in prices would have occurred with a few electronic items. With respect to food, light bill, telephone bill, water bill and all of the other requirements that are used on a daily

basis for living, these have all gone up exponentially post-1997. Therefore, I cannot accept that any of the social partnership agreements that we would have entertained would have achieved that particular stated objectives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that there appears to be a disconnecting between the income of businesses and the income of workers and if individuals would want an explanation of what I am saying, and they are reasonably honest with themselves, how many businesses in Barbados pay their managers and senior managers, \$30 000 and 40 000 per month, while the people at the bottom are taking home \$1 100, \$1 200 and \$1 300 per month.

This is one of the problems that I believe it was Peter Drucker who explained the disconnection between productivity and workers. Sir, you can increase your productivity by technology through mechanisation and while you do that, a company can become significantly more profitable but it does not have to benefit the worker.

Therefore, we have to be very careful when we talk about these sorts of agreements and protocols. Sir, we think there is an automatic arrangement built in where the worker is going to benefit in Barbados but that is far from being true.

These Protocol requirements are managed by human beings that have, with respect to the tripartite arrangement, three differing interests, there is supposed to be a worker interest. There is a private sector interest and I am not too sure what is the interest of Government in the tripartite arrangement.

I am saying, I can fault no attempt in principle to come to a position where you look

for conciliation, dispute resolution and other methods to attempt to reduce a hostile work environment. When I say that, there is nobody in Barbados who can say that we have not had a hostile work environment in the last five to ten years, with the number of work stoppages in Barbados, in Government departments and out of Government departments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if part of the reasoning behind establishing such an arrangement is to minimise and reduce that type of behaviour, then, it has failed. This is the point. It has failed with respect to promoting social harmony in Barbados in the workplace. It has also failed with respect to having an equitable distribution of the wealth. It has failed as well to establish a low inflation and an equilibrium between prices and incomes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that the process must be one that evolves in such a way that it effectively deals with the social and economic problems that exist in the country. I will give you an example of what I mean.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have made the comment that a social partnership is in fact a macro-economic policy instrument. Sir, to confront globalisation, we have been told in Barbados that what should occur or what did occur and is supposed to be acceptable is that you are supposed to have had an amalgamation of banks, an amalgamation of insurance companies, and an amalgamation of many of the large businesses in Barbados. The pretext has been that this is supposed to enhance competition and competitiveness with respect to its goods and services competing on the domestic and international markets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has in fact happened is that we have had a reduction in competition in all of those areas by the closure of many banks and the amalgamation of many

banks and insurance companies. Therefore, when they are saying in one breath that the process is to allow for greater competition, that is not what we have been seeing.

This is one of the reasons the banks in Barbados could operate in a more oligopolistic position and that is why the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West had been making the point with respect to the adjustments to the deposit rate by the Central Bank. It is not just a simple matter of saying that you have a tripartite arrangement and automatically that means there is not a methodology to manage it in the most effective way to promote social and economic development of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I now go to clause 3.19 and I want to go to clause 2 with respect to the agreement. I now speak specifically with respect to clause 5 subsection 8.

House 81, sequence 17, 13:5014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Sir, it is said that one of the major specific objectives is the protection of the domestic economy by the continued safeguard of the existing parity of the exchange rate, recognising that any deterioration in this rate will lead to a significant reduction in the living standards of the vast majority of Barbadians and the achievement of a balance between price and income, recognising that demands are made upon workers to restrain their proposals to increases in wages and other compensation payments and so on.

I raise that point, Mr. Speaker, because what we have had in Barbados over the past three to four years goes completely counter to that stated objective. What we have had in

Barbados are conditions that are in fact threatening the exchange rate of Barbados. What we have had in Barbados is a significant worsening of the external current account balance of Barbados. What we have had is a significant increase in the national debt of Barbados and the external position of the debt to the tune of 29.1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. What we have also had is a significant worsening of all the trade positions of Barbados with respect to our CARICOM neighbours and externally to the point where between 1994 and 2005 our import bill rose by \$1.2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, that is the reality, therefore when I read a lot of this fluff and these statements about objectives and intentions and so on, it does not square with the reality of what is happening in Barbados right now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go to page 32 and speak with respect to section 7.12 specifically Section (d) which says that:

(government shall seek to minimise any adverse impact of its monetary, fiscal and commercial policies on the prices of goods and services.)

Mr. Speaker, it was this administration who in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 decreased the deposit rate by the Central Bank. Sir, that resulted in a reduction of the cost of lending to businesses and consumers. The net effect of that was the increasing of the purchasing power of individuals and the net result was that we imported more and more because we are a small open economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is the same administration that in 2005 is now attempting to correct that by increasing the deposit rate, a reversal of exactly what they did in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004, four separate changes. It is this administration that did that and now wants to

penalise Barbadians by saying that Barbadians are consumer hungry, they are spending too much money. Sir, it is this administration that created the macro-economic framework for that, and now I am reading all of this sort of nonsense inside here.

Sir, I know that we have an incomes protocol in place that is supposed to be linked to productivity, but there is no relationship to prices because if that were so, we could not have had the significant increase in the cost of living with respect of all the fundamental requirements for living in Barbados. If anyone wants to review what I am saying they could look at the pre-VAT prices of one tomato in the supermarket or one sweet pepper which today is \$5 or \$7.

Sir, I have made the comment that included in this whole situation was a misunderstanding of this administration as to what would have been the true impact of the Value Added Tax with respect to its implications for income and prices. Sir, I am making that statement because what has happened is that the Value Added Tax has leveraged the buying power of the business interests in Barbados and has transferred all of the cost dimensions to the consumers.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that has to be correct is that if you went into town prior to the introduction of VAT and you had to buy one drinking glass, that would have attracted about four or five different duties that would have amounted to approximately 75, 80 or 90 per cent on top of the cost, insurance and freight. Sir, we have a situation now where that 75 or 80 per cent duty is reduced only to 15 per cent. This means that if you had a \$1 000 to spend you could buy many more drinking glasses after VAT than pre-VAT. That is how it has leveraged the buying power of business interests, it is only commonsense.

Sir, when the business interests then

amalgamate it means that it strengthens their buying power even more. There is no rocket science as to why they are now making significant profits and the only people who are being restrained in Barbados are the workers. Am I am supposed to sit down and accept that is a positive thing for Barbados? Certainly not.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that the reality of the tripartite arrangement has been an increase in opportunity and profitability for the business interests and it has compromised equally the type of increases in wages and salaries that are due to the workers with respect to their input in business. I am saying in conclusion that it has failed with respect to its fundamental specific objectives. There is no such thing in Barbados at this time called an equilibrium between prices and incomes; that is foolishness. There is no such thing called a distribution of economic growth in Barbados fairly and equitably; that is nonsense, it has failed.

Sir, I do not know what (enjoys a greater degree of exclusivity(in the society means because Barbadians feel more excluded in their own society today than in 1994. Sir, what has happened, without a doubt, under this so-called arrangement is that the rich have got richer and the poor have got poorer in Barbados. The buying power of the middle class has been so reduced that it is almost equivalent to that of the lower class or the low income worker in Barbados, that is the start of the factual reality of this position.

Mr. Speaker, in principle, as I started, the Social Partnership has to be used as a macro-economic strategy to help to defend your fiscal and monetary policies as they work together towards promoting social and economic development, but it has to be managed in such a way that it evolves and adapts and it must necessarily deliver with respect to the objectives that it so claims that it wants to execute.

Mr. Speaker, when I analyse Barbados with respect to the distribution of economic capacity, I am convinced that these sets of protocols have not achieved the stated goals.

House 81 Sequence 18

2:00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Mr. Speaker, I support the concept but I do not support the way or the mechanisms by which the tripartite arrangement have been utilised as a macro-economic strategy. Sir, the evidence of its results are there for Barbadians to see. Therefore, I am not going to be caught up by the fancy platitudes of Barbados having a Social Partnership and that we are one of the only people in the world that has a Social Partnership. What is important to me, is that I want to see results that will benefit poor Barbadians and not the rich ones.

Mr. Speaker, how can I accept a Social Partnership when, in corporatising the Bridgetown Seaport and the Airport, an administration seeks to establish that capitalisation in such a way that the average man could not purchase shares. Therefore, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael South wants me to remind him of what was the bond issue and the fact that there was a \$20 000 minimum requirement, I will do so. If he wants me to tell him about the Grantley Adams International Airport, I will do so too.

Mr. Speaker, despite all this, I am hearing talk about creating an all-inclusive society and about distributing income. Sir, do you not have poor people in your constituency? Would they not like to be able to purchase shares?

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I will end by re-emphasising two points. I believe that if the concept of a Social Partnership is made into a practical entity and applied in such a way that would meaningfully uplift the low income people and not create a disparity between those who have a high income and those who have a low income, then I could support the concept and its implication.

Mr. Speaker, I am supporting the concept but not the application because it has not evolved. Sir, do you believe this Protocol takes into consideration a pig farmer, a chicken farmer or a vendor? It does not. Sir, the applications in this Protocol cannot be only about big companies like the Barbados Shipping and Trading (BS&T), it must evolve to meaningfully represent Barbadians. Sir, that is why I am saying that while it evolved out of a position when Barbados was in crisis with respect to its foreign exchange reality, we have now moved into a scenario where the context of the tripartite arrangements must be broadened and must become more all-inclusive.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me begin by trying to establish the philosophical basis for the existence of the Protocol in the first place and where this Government is going, relative to subsequent Protocols after the others were put in place.

Mr. Speaker, I was at a loss to understand either the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or his Deputy, relative to whether or not they are in support of the Protocol. The Honourable Members seem to speak in a cloudy way, relative to whether or not we should continue with the concepts of the Protocols in Barbados. Sir, they speak seemingly in support of these Protocols but then they find every reason why

we should not, in my opinion, proceed with the concepts of these protocols.

Mr. Speaker, let us establish exactly what is meant

to be achieved in its broadest context by having these protocols. Honourable Members would remember how protocols were born in Barbados. They were born at a time of deep economic crisis, which created an environment in which other tools ...

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: This is very relevant. The historical basis for it must be relevant. The first Prices and Incomes Protocol was born at a time when there was deep economic crisis in the society, a crisis which was created by the same people who now come to (dog dance) around the issue as to whether we should have a protocol. Sir, subsequent protocols clearly were born out of different environments. Every subsequent protocol has its broader and more specific objectives enshrined in them, which deal with those specific issues but the broad framework in which this particular protocol was initially founded cannot be dispelled.

Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the Honourable Member for St. Philip West that it is a macro-economic tool to rebalance the society, but the situation that pertained in 1992 and 1993, no longer pertains today in Barbados. Therefore, to say that Barbados has not moved in any direction since the initial protocol was put in place, would, in my opinion, not be the best of argument. Sir, for anyone to say that, he or she would be bordering on hypocrisy. Sir, as far as we are concerned, the initial protocol was meant to establish a balance in society.

Mr. Speaker, I hear Honourable Members quoting only certain areas, which, in their opinion, they say the protocols have not

worked. I have not heard the Honourable Members talking about issues within the protocols, in which Barbados has showed substantial progress.

Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from Page 35, (Wealth Creation and Poverty Eradication), and Page 36, (Law and Order). They chose the areas within the Protocol to suit their own means but there is social re-balancing that has taken place in this society of, which we should be proud.

Mr. Speaker, in 1993, when the Prices and Incomes Protocol was put in place, if you were to look at the number of people living below the poverty line then, as opposed to those living below the poverty line now, you would see a substantial decrease in those numbers. Some Honourable Members are arguing that Barbados has not moved anywhere and that the protocols have not set up the wider net for Barbados to progress, either socially or economically.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, I make the point that a protocol can only be structured in a general framework in which Barbados must exist, how Barbados should do business and what type of broader industrial relations climate should exist. A protocol cannot dictate everything as to how the industrial relation climate should operate. We set out a broad framework and within that broad framework, substantial initiatives have been put in place, to create a better social and economic environment for Barbadians.

H:No81(19)210 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation of Hon. N. A. LYNCH:

Sir, in 1993 when the Protocol was put in place, what is used as below the poverty line was \$5 500 a year. In 1993, we had over 9 000 households in Barbados or 11 per cent of our population living within that poverty line. Today, we have 7 000 households or 8 per cent of our population living within that poverty line. Sir, as a matter of fact, there are people living within this poverty line who own cars. Mr. Speaker, what is even more relevant is that Barbados has a better safety net than any other country in this region.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that people are crying out in Barbados about prices and incomes but we cannot blame the Government for what is happening in the society when there are increases in certain prices. Sir, we need an environment of collaboration, conciliation and dialogue. It seems to me that the two Honourable Members on the other side who spoke do not want to create an environment in which dialogue exists because a Government alone cannot control issues relating to prices.

Mr. Speaker, the Protocol is clear. It says at 7(3.1):

(The Social Partnership also believes that one yardstick by which the development of the society can be measured is the level of respect demonstrated for law and order in the society.)

Sir, in this society the crime rate continues to fall . . .

Asides.

Hon. N A. LYNCH: I know that the Honourable Member would tell me that he does not believe in statistics. The Leader of the Opposition has already said today that he does not believe in the unemployment statistics and a number of other statistics but, Sir, the crime statistic shows that crime in Barbados continues to fall.

Asides.

Hon. N A. LYNCH: Sir, people use statistics when it is convenience to them. Mr. Speaker, I am talking about a society in which we are creating an environment of collaboration, conciliation and dialogue under a social partnership which sees areas of this society developing which were never developed before.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate issues of poverty eradication and the establishment of law and order to the point where we are seeing reduction of the level of crime in this country, which in itself is an achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to some of the other things raised in the debate relative to the two-tier system of wage increases so that those at the bottom get twice as much as those at the top. Sir, we cannot just throw those kinds of policy initiatives out into wide space because relativity must be maintained between the top and bottom where salaries are concerned. Therefore, to say that people at the bottom should get twice as much as the people at the top is not to take into account all the other variables that determine how salary increases are brokered. Sir, as far as I am concerned, the process in Barbados has already created an environment in which they are certain relativity between those at the bottom and the top and, Sir, I think it has worked well for Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, we have been able to maintain a relatively low inflation rate. It is a dangerous thing to create a policy initiative that states that those at the bottom of the ladder should get twice as much in terms of increases as those at the top. Sir, we have to create an environment in which the Protocol works well for Barbados, it has kept our society balanced and we should continue in that vein.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the industrial relations climate and all the specific and general issues cited to what has been happening at the Post Office and other Government buildings, there is no way in which a prices and incomes regime alone would create a basis for the most congenial industrial relations climate. There are issues which would arise within the broader scope of this Protocol that will create tensions between labour, Government and even the private sector. Sir, at the same time, we have enough balance in our regime in Barbados that has permitted us to be able to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, could you imagine if we did not have the issues which are spoken of relative to this Protocol? I believe we have created a broad framework which is working. I am not so much interested in the thickness of the document and that it is not indicative of the climate in terms of the significant number of objectives which we have put in place. The objectives that have been put in place are necessary to help created the climate and they have worked for us so far.

Mr. Speaker, there was a situation specifically raised by the (red caps(at the airport. Sir, I want to clear the air about this. It seems to me that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition does not understand what is happening in terms of the (red caps(at the airport. I have heard the Leader of the Opposition say that (red caps(should not be in the Arrival Hall in the first place and if he had his way, Sir, they would not be at the airport at all.

Mr. Speaker, it is a private concession within the airport and Government is seeking to find the most congenial environment for keeping the (red caps(within the airport. Sir, whether or not the concessionaire should pay Government is an issue that always existed. When the Democratic Labour Party was in office, the

same regime which exists at the airport relative to the (red caps(existed then and the Democratic Labour Party did not change it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member said he believes there is an opportunity in some way to help Party faithful, supporters and the like but they never changed the system. It is my opinion that if anyone is running a concession at the airport and that person is not meeting their commitment to Government they should be relieved of it and the opportunity given to someone else.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the (red caps(situation at the airport is not a bad arrangement because we have been able to keep these 70 (red caps(occupied and we do not intend to get rid of them. The concession will be reviewed but the most important thing is that, as a Government, we have been able to keep those 70 people at work.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak relative to issues of a number of closures and social disharmony created by this Protocol.

H81/14:20

Sequence 20

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Sir, the Barbados National Bank situation which ahs been beaten up by the Democratic Labour Party forms part of what would have happened under a protocol... The Honourable Member spoke about Sagicor, First Caribbean Bank and Cable and Wireless.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party encouraged Barbadians not to invest in the Barbados National Bank. The former Leader of the Opposition is on record as having told

people that it was Christmas time, to spend their money and not to invest in the Barbados National Bank. The Barbados National Bank had to be more competitive before people could widely invest in it. I think that the decision to sell the shares in Barbados National Bank at the time related to the perfect or more congenial environment for an arrangement under a protocol.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados National Bank developed into a better and more progressive bank. I think that Barbados National Bank triggered in Barbados a reduction in interest rates and merchant banking in Barbados. At the time when Barbadians were being encouraged by Government to buy shares in the Barbados National Bank, members of the Democratic Labour Party were telling them not to invest in the bank. It has become a better bank than it was in the past.

Sir, Barbados National Bank introduced a more competitive regime in Barbados. Barbados National Bank has reduced mortgage rates creating an environment of merchant banking that did not exist before in Barbados. We know the issues that people have experienced in Barbados, businesses and individuals, relative to the behaviour of the banking sector. Sir, once Barbados National Bank was sold, its standards were raised, as far as I am concerned, Barbadians had the opportunity to invest in a bank, which has gave them more choices.

Sir, the issue that Barbados National Bank should never have been sold, in my opinion, is not the greatest argument. The issues of social disharmony, the slowing of wages, slowing the highest part of expenditure so that the production of a cheaper and higher quality product can be produced, are again a very strange arguments for the Honourable Member for St. Philip West.

Asides

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Sir, at the time the Protocol was put in place, and I use the tourism industry as an example, the greatest part of costs within most businesses is salaries, wages and related expenses. One of the challenges we have in making the hotel industry more profitable, is that in an environment which has a strong labour representative culture, it is difficult to keep that are of expenditure under control. In a society where Barbadians continue to be well-educated, with an emphasis on upward mobility, the issue of wages and related costs will always arise.

Sir, in a small developing society with well-educated people, we do not have the same facilities for controls which, for example, Jamaica, St. Lucia and other countries have with their wages. It cannot be done in Barbados. I believe that we have been able, under the existing regime, to keep those salaries and wages controlled in such a way that they continue to fuel a certain level of productivity and profitability for the existing entity, but it is not easy to maintain control in a society like ours.

Sir, there are a lot of people who would love to invest in Barbados, but they examine salaries and other related costs that form part of the overall expenditure of business, particularly in the hotel sector, a lot of them balk at the idea of coming to Barbados. We have been able within this environment to keep labour and labour representatives at a level that ensures Barbadians that they are getting a piece of the pie.

Sir, in any environment people are always going to argue that they should be receiving more. As far as I am concerned, we have been able, over time, to maintain a social balance in Barbados for people to become part and parcel of the process of development, upward mobility

and the movement of the business.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West, wants to tell me that it is creating social disharmony and a decline in wages. It was necessary at the time it was put in place. Since then, nobody can argue that Barbadians have not continued to move up with their fair share of the pie. There are matters of inflation et cetera, but Barbadians cannot by and large argue that where there has been business and productivity increases, they have not received their fair share of the pie.

Sir, in 1993 when I joined the private sector in Barbados there were difficulties relating to productivity in the hotel sector. At the time hotels wanted to tie increases in salary only to productivity, but it was like a gain-sharing formula. However, as we progressed, the Protocol crystalised. We were trying to tie most of the increases workers received, to their productivity.

Sir, there were some hotels that showed serious increases in profitability and, therefore workers should have gained a part of the pie. There were some that did not show profitability at all. The unions were very clear that in certain instances persons were going to receive increases and some were not. We needed to regularise that situation. We created a pool where profitability gains were shared, with a gain-sharing formula among all employees, even though some people seemingly did not deserve to receive an increase at the time. Sir, that is what I am talking about, dialogue maintains the social balance in Barbados. Sir, some also said that those who did not show profitability or increases in productivity should have received nothing.

I do not believe that this particular Protocol or the ones before created any environment of social disharmony in Barbados. As a matter of fact, I think that all the Statements of Intent

within the Protocol, even though not achieved in the same way or at the same pace have created an environment where Barbadians feel that they have a stake in the development of Barbados.

Sir, these roundabout arguments, which the Honourable Member for St. Philip West argues, on the one hand, he supports the Protocol, lauds it, then he argues on the other hand that it has made no gains, equitably and fairly, relative to the distribution of benefits of economic growth. He also argues that as far as he is concerned it has done nothing to create a basis for control of the exchange rate. The Honourable Member argues that he cannot accept a Protocol where the average man is left out and the average poor man cannot buy a share in the seaport.

Sir, which poor man goes running around the place trying to buy shares in a seaport or an airport? The average poor man in your constituency and mine is looking for upward mobility, a better job, education and housing. He does not have money to invest in the Port.

Sir, it is wrong to give Barbadians the impression that you measure the success of a society by those at the bottom who can invest in the Port. They just cannot invest in the Port. That is a fact of life.

Sir, look at us here today? All of us would have come from the same background but we have ended up here. I find these hypocritical arguments that we bring to this Honourable Chamber, in my opinion, are not befitting of people who have moved up in a society.

Sir, no one in the Bay Land, where there are persons of various means who are progressing daily would ever be able to buy any shares in business. There are some of them with issues of savings. That is why I disagree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition relative to the issue of savings.

H81: 14.30 p.m.

Sequence 21

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 22, 2:30 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. N.A. LYNCH:

Sir, people in Barbados in the middle band should be encouraged to save because that is their major means of being able to invest in Barbados. I do not believe that the lower band of people have enough money to buy shares in the port or the airport.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the protocol has worked as well for the pig farmer as it has worked for BS&T. The pig farmer has gained because we have been able to create an environment of social harmony in Barbados through the Protocol. I believe that BS&T may have advanced and the business environment in Barbados may have got better. I also believe that a lot of the gains have been shared.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West could disagree with me but I also feel that at the level of the small business, unless you create the most congenial climate for business to exist, unless you create an environment of dialogue, unless you create an environment of conciliation, unless you create an environment of dispute resolution in which people feel that they have a say and a stake, what it is going to cause is much social disruption to the point where none of us are going to have a stake at all. This is why I believe in the Protocol and what this Government is doing to create that environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Members on that side could create the little red herrings and drag them across the trail and say that they

believe nobody got any increases. I know that the hotel sector has done very well in terms of repositioning people at the bottom of the ladder and bringing them up to a higher level. Since the initial Protocol came into being, many people in this society and in that particular area had their standards uplifted.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Protocol is significantly important to keeping that social balance and harmony for Barbados. I am not going to walk about and tell anybody to argue for it on the one hand and then try to dispel it on the other. This Government has done enough to prove that these Protocols should exist, in addition to creating the right social and economic balance for Barbadians to believe that they have a stake in this society.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join in this debate and to say from the outset that no one could fault the initial idea when this relationship was joined. It is clear, Sir, that the initial attempt was the right attempt and that there was no need to bring this to Parliament and to make it law because what occurred, Sir, is that those persons who deal with profits and those who deal with revenue gained, but those who deal with incomes or wages have suffered.

Mr. Speaker, we have had four Protocols since the initial Protocol. I am challenging everyone on the other side to pick up this document and the Estimates of Barbados for those five periods and look at the period since the second Protocol and tell me how the workers of Barbados have gained. I can pick up this document and show you how the Government has been able to increase its revenue by doubling it and I can also show you how the private sector, the other party to this

Agreement, has been able to double profits.

Sir, this tripartite relationship has no interest for the workers. It has been pain and punishment for the workers of Barbados, so much so, Sir, that sometimes I ask myself how many Ministers of Finance we have in this country, because when I hear the real Minister of Finance, I know the Honourable gentleman represents the Government of Barbados. Sometimes, when I hear another gentleman, I have to ask myself whether that gentleman represents the interest of the workers or the interest of the Government. Sometimes when I listen well, I have to ask myself whether that gentleman represents the interest of the private sector.

What I am saying this evening, Sir, is that the interest of the private sector and the interest of the Government have been put by all parties but the interest of the worker has not been put by any party as yet. Sir, for eleven years, we have had to come to this Parliament and fight on behalf of the workers, even go to extremes, where we have been forced to demonstrate to this Parliament that even though the workers are supposed to be part of a three-sided triangle, when it comes to their time to share in the bounty of the country, the bottom drops out and leaves the private sector and the Government. It collapses and comes together and there is a straight line. It means that the workers and the Government are all one but the workers are not sharing in the profits.

We have to be very careful because when we go on the streets of Barbados and we listen to those young men we could understand why those young men do not want to remove themselves from the street corners of Barbados into productive activity.

They believe that if they move from the street corners to the thing called work that they are enslaving themselves again and it is all because

they have been able to watch this tripartite relationship not working in the interest of the people whom they look to and whom they regard as workers.

I am saying, Sir, that for the Government to come to this Parliament every year or two years and bring legislation and put it into the Laws of Barbados, making it bind on the people, it tells me that this is a Government that does not understand what is occurring on the street corners of Barbados.

Sir, if we do not watch it, we will create social unrest and there would be an impression created in this country that there are all Napoleons, no Snowballs, that is, some are more equal than others. Already we are seeing it being created in this country in a very smart way.

I am saying, Sir, we have to understand that in a three-way relationship, all three parties are equal. It cannot be that the private sector is more important than the Government or the Government is more important than the private sector or the workers are more important than the private sector or Government. They are in it together. They are in it for one call and that is to see a better Barbados. Sir, when you have a relationship where you are asking three different groups of people to come together as one and only two can appreciate what is occurring, you have a problem.

Mr. Speaker, as I said already, when I look at the Estimates of Barbados, I can see where the private sector has gained, I can see the Government increasing its revenue from \$1 billion to more than \$2 billion but what I cannot see as a statistic is where the workers of Barbados have been able to increase their position.

Sir, what have we seen? No substantial increases in incomes for the workers but every

day we can see substantial increases in prices. We can see a situation where interest rates went down, this was a good policy but all of sudden, the interest rates are now increasing.

Sir, let me explain something to you. When VAT was introduced in this country there was a shift from Government to the private sector and those changes did not come to the workers of Barbados.

House 81, sequence 22, 14:4014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

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

Sir, when they had a low interest scheme in this country, those small businesses had a cushion and a reason to be in business. That is why I supported the Governor of the Central Bank when she said that we were going to have a low interest scheme in this country because whether you have a low or high interest scheme, it does not affect those large businesses involved in importation or manufacturing in this country because they dictate the level of profit that they want to make, while the others cannot do that. Therefore, when interest is increased, it means that you are increasing the cost of doing business in Barbados.

Sir, at this point in time we cannot have a situation where we are increasing the cost of doing business in Barbados for small business people when the Government is asking those same business people to increase production. Sir, any increase in interest rates will affect the increase in production, which would automatically affect the foreign exchange to be earned from these businesses, but it will not affect the importers, for the simple reason that they have had their cushion and are able to set the level of profits to be made.

However, Sir, those small manufacturers, those people in agriculture, those fishermen and those vendors who sell the produce of the agriculture people and the manufacturers will be affected because they do not have the cash flow. Sir, they will have to go to the bank to get money to sell the produces of Barbados, while those persons who sell the produces of foreign people already have the cash stashed away, some even have it overseas, and that is not a negative because this is now the second tier foreign exchange market of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I say to people that the private sector is in business for making money and if they see an avenue to make money, we cannot fault them. What is wrong, is when you have a Government policy that allows this to occur, while at the same time punishing the real producers of Barbados. That is exactly what is happening in Barbados. Those who spend foreign exchange have been given the opportunity to make large sums of money and those who earn foreign exchange have been punished. Sir, this is where the correction must be made in this country in order for this country to go forward.

Mr. Speaker, protocols are a waste of time. What we need to have in Barbados is a true relationship where we can increase the productive capacity of the country and look after the interest of all three parties at the same time. You cannot try to achieve something by leaving out one section of the relationship. Sir, that is why this country Barbados has not been able to produce at the rate that it should.

Sir, I am warning this country that we have to understand that if we suffocate our most productive people, we would suffocate the economy. What has happened in this country is that we suffocated the workers who are the real engine turners of the economy and that is why the economy is operating at the level at which it is now operating.

Sir, if you free up the workers, you would see an increase in production which will benefit all parties, but instead of doing that we have been punishing the workers in Barbados. I have spoken about this nearly every session of Parliament and it has fallen on deaf ears. Nobody seems to be interested because as they hear the word worker, it seems to be talking about the enemy. The workers of Barbados have now become the enemy of Barbados, but that is not fair. The workers are the productive people of the country. It is like the parliamentarians to Parliament. If we do not have any parliamentarians, we would not have a Parliament. Therefore, if we do not have any workers, we do not have any production and we must understand that.

Mr. Speaker, unemployed people eat and employed people eat, so you have to decide whether you want employed people eating or unemployed people eating. Sir, I want to know what is the benefit of having unemployed people eating and not employed people. You think about it, Sir. It might sound like foolishness to some.

Mr. Speaker, the best thing that was said this evening was said by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South when he said that this tripartite relationship was born of a deep economic crisis in this society. Those were the words of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South not my words. He also said it was done to re-balance the society. Sir, if it is true that in the 90s, when we had the economic crisis these things occur, can you pray tell me why it is still occurring when the economy is doing so well as quoted by Government? The Honourable Member for St. Michael South is saying that we must retain this Prices and Income Protocol for the simple reason that we are still in deep economic crisis and that the re-balance of the society must still occur.

Sir, I thought that since the Democratic Labour Party was extinguished from leadership of this Parliament that all the corrective measures were put in place to correct all of these problems, but little did I know, and I had to wait 11 years to find out, that an Honourable Member of Government would admit that nothing has changed since 1994, and that the same economic situation is occurring, despite all the talk that was said and all the curse that was heaped on the Democratic Labour Party. What we thought we were solving in the early 1990s, we are still trying to solve today in 2005. Those are the words of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, not mine.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the worst. I can give you another indicator to prove that we are now worst off than we were in 1994. In 1994, we fought for and protected the strength of the Barbados dollar. In 2005, we are now saying that the value of the Barbados dollar should be the value we had in 1973. Sir, I want to repeat that. In 1994, that bad and indifferent Government that was accused, abused and marched against, fought to protect the currency level of the Barbados dollar because they understood the economic engineering that occurred in 1973, when we moved from the EC dollar to the Barbados dollar.

Sir, in 1973, in the height of the oil crisis we moved from the EC dollar to the Barbados dollar, which meant that it appreciated by about 25 per cent. Now, in 2005, we are having the Governor of the Central Bank agreeing with the Government of Barbados that the Barbadian dollar should now move back to its 1973 position, which tells me that we are no better off in 2005 and that our 2005 position is now our 1973 position. Sir, we are now living in a true devaluation of about 25 per cent, which has been admitted by the Governor of the Central Bank and the leadership of the Barbados Labour Party because the EC dollar is about 25 per cent less than the Barbados dollar.

Sir, any call for Barbadians to readjust their lives to the EC dollar, which they moved away from in 1973, is an admission that this country has been depreciated by 25 per cent. Sir, no sensible person can fault that logic. Strong economic factors are there to present and substantiate the argument and it is within reason.

House 81 Sequence 23

2:50 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

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

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that it was not the Democratic Labour Party who made that call. It was the Democratic Labour Party who, in a crisis, fought to protect the Barbadian dollar, even though it meant losing the Government. Sir, we now have a three-term Government, which has created all the economic activities to charter Barbados and to take it to another level, only to find out in 2005 that instead of being a developed country, we are going backwards to devalue ourselves by 25 per cent. In other words, that good Barbados dollar is not good anymore in Barbados. It is the Eastern Caribbean dollars which happens to be \$0.73 to the Barbados dollar. Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that we need to make a number of practical changes in this country. We need to make the people of Barbados recognise that working for themselves or for the good of Barbados, is something of importance. Sir, we cannot do that by making people promises, instead we have to reward them for coming on the job and for increasing the productive capacity of the country, but if they are threatened, they would remain on the (blocks(. When they remain on the (blocks(,

they would still eat. If they are moved off the (blocks(, they would still eat but what they would do in the process, would be to increase the productive capacity of the country.

Mr. Speaker, people believe that (herb(is all the young men in Barbados want, but that is not true. They want an opportunity to be able to contribute to their country. They also would like to plant the kind of herb that can be found in gardening. Instead, they have been deprived of having that kind of gardening opportunity and have been pushed into a culture where they are now forced to cultivate the wrong herb. Sir, I would want to see those young men planting herbs to cook with and not herb for smoking because they too want to contribute to the economy of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we need to take away the negative social impact which has impacted on them and put them into the productive impact, to help them to produce for the country. Sir, I am saying that fight will be led from this side because we understand what the young men want. We understand that while working, they do not want to be punished. Therefore, this side must endorse that policy and must make sure that our brothers and sisters do not (lime(on the (blocks(instead of finding working, while others can fly to Barbados and can find work.

Mr. Speaker, it is so ridiculous that we in Parliament can stand here and talk about the Prices and Incomes Protocol, also known as the Social Partnership, and our Barbadian nurses have been chased away and people imported to do their jobs. Sir, we are talking about a Social Partnership, where we cannot get a nurse in Barbados but can get one from outside. Are you telling me that you are bringing this Bill to Parliament for me to discuss?

Mr. Speaker, this country Barbados must first be for Barbadians and then anybody else afterwards. I am not saying to leave out

anybody but let us first look to help Barbadians. If you are telling me that my Caribbean brothers and sisters want to be productive in Barbados but cannot and that when one goes to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, we are now being dictated to by the WTO, the FTAA and the OECD. In other words, we are no longer being ruled by entities within the Caribbean, but by outside entities.

Mr. Speaker, we as politicians have to be realistic. We have to understand that if we stump our toe tomorrow, it would be the next-door neighbour who would look after us, instead of somebody else flying into Barbados to look after us. The same thing that is occurring today at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is happening at the Transport Board, the Bridgetown Port and in tourism, where no opportunities are given for our local people.

Mr. Speaker, what is even worse is that Government says it is divesting. While Government says it is divesting, it is divesting in relation to the rich but in relation to the poor, it is squeezing the poor.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I know that you cannot relate to the idea of this Social Partnership because you cannot see the connection, neither can I. That is why you feel that I am not connecting because it is rather difficult to find the connection and the reason for this Bill before Parliament today.

Sir, you would understand the difficulties that we have because we represent the people who are suffering. I know both of us pride ourselves as being true representatives of the people and that we understand how difficult it is to face our people when we see them suffering and on the (blocks). Sir, for instance, when you travel through the Kew Road or Bush Hall Yard Gap, you would see them. Therefore, as

parliamentarians, we must understand that the Social Partnership has outlived its usefulness. Sir, after the first Prices and Incomes Protocol, there was no need to have others.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand what is happening and what must happen. Sir, do you honestly believe that we are here talking about bringing Protocol Five to Parliament, but a Chairman of the Transport Board could brag on television about how the Transport Board has been able to cut out the BT buses from getting work, which resulted in the fact that workers and school children were not able to reach their homes. Would you believe that despite all this, we are talking about divesting and about Government removing itself from certain activities, to create the opportunity for the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, somebody must tell the Chairman of the Transport Board that it is the Government who issues the BT permits and, therefore, if Government wants the BT bus owners to be able to profit, they cannot have a Government issuing BT permits, while, at the same time, there is a Chairman who is depriving people from getting permits at the Bridgetown Port because that Chairman probably figures that black people should not be transporting tourists.

Mr. Speaker, this is serious business and we have to understand that we are dealing with social relationships and social partnerships. We must understand that we must correct the ills of this society because some day, I would like to believe that when we leave this Parliament, that we would leave a record of which we could be proud.

Sir, I know that if you were to retire at the end of the next term and have to look back, you would ask yourself what has this Parliament done for your people. Sir, your only consolation would be that you had been

fortunate because of the fact that you cannot claim the privilege that other Honourable Members and I can claim because you have been guided by the Chair and did not have that same leverage. Therefore, you would be forgiven.

Mr. Speaker, while you could be forgiven, unfortunately the other Honourable Members and I cannot be forgiven, because we were not guided by the Chair, if, after 2004 to 2008, the people of Barbados have not been able to achieve. Sir, the opportunities have been there for deliverance, but one thing I would say to this Government is that there is one last saving grace between now and Cricket World Cup, 2007. This Government has a wonderful opportunity of including every Barbadian and bringing them on board in the economy of Barbados, to make sure that they share in the bounty. H:No81(24)300 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

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

Mr. Speaker, I am told that World Cup 2007 would be bountiful. I have no reason to doubt that even though we ran for the finals, that we should have negotiated for the English to come to Barbados and forget about the finals. Sir, we will not look at that fact but will be big-minded and recognise that we have a piece of the action of World Cup 2007 and that we must do everything in power to make it work. We must make sure that Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation gets the necessary resources that it can make Barbados the place it should be. Sir, we must not see World Cup 2007 only for the Government and the private sector but it should create a social partnership for three, the workers, Government and private sector.

Mr. Speaker, we are our brothers(keepers and we must behave in that way. We cannot

continue to behave as if workers are back in the dark days, that they should only get something to eat on a daily basis and that it would be enough. Sir, the workers are the ones who turn the capital of the private sector and the ones who generate revenue for the Government. Once we have that appreciation of workers, we will understand that it is impossible to have the donkey pull the cart and not feed it.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the donkey must be fed as well as the cart maintained because the wheels of the cart must be grease to make sure that the bearings operate properly. Sir, I come from the village academy and I fully understand the meaning of donkey and cart.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is from the city and has always been privilege but in rural Barbados we have no choice so we resort to what can be used. The Honourable Member is speaking about the town donkey while I am speaking about the rural donkey.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, when I come to Bridgetown, I do not see any donkeys, I only see pretty cars like Lexus et cetera. Sir, we understand the importance of keeping animals to make manure to put in the fields to grown the crops. This is why we understand the importance of land. This is why we do not want anybody to come to rural Barbados to steal our land because we have to feed ourselves in times of crisis. This is why we need the Social Partnership to make sure the things I have spoken of previously will allow us to have a better Barbados.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please conclude.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Social Partnership has its usefulness in the initial stages but today, this Social Partnership is like a lady who is very beautiful going to the hairdresser to get makeup to make sure that her face remains beautiful. Sir, she is naturally beautiful so why is she going to the hairdresser? She has no wrinkles so there is no need for powder or makeup but yet still she goes to the hairdresser.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: the Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to say a few words in support of this Resolution, which is intended to give effect the coming into being of Protocol V of the Social Partnership. One must ask why one would be supportive of this Resolution in the face of such negativity emanating from the utterances on the other side. I have a few reasons which I think justifies my position in terms of the support I give to the Resolution.

Mr. Speaker, we must recognise that in this day and age we must certainly look to establish and to give effect to new models of governance. I do not think we can be satisfied in 2005, in this 21st century, to be overly relying on models of governance which are carried over from the colonial era. It is not even at all satisfactory that we be overly relying on models of governance which relates more appropriately to a pre-globalised area, so the changing times in which we live suggest that we need to find new and innovative models of governance. When it comes to the practice of industrial relations, which affects our livelihoods and the

well-being of the country economically as well as socially, it is essential that we examine the existing models of governance under which industrial relations practices are pursued in Barbados. It is in that context that I support the Resolution intended to give effect to Protocol V.

Mr. Speaker, it is an innovative way of setting the frame in place within which the principal parties or partners around the industrial relations process can come together and pursue the matter of national development of the Barbadian economic and the social landscape of this country which we love so very much.

Sir, indeed, I see it as a model of governance, as was alluded to earlier by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, and perhaps it was birth in expediency at a time when a period of darkness obtained in the country with respect to the economic performance of the country but we have long passed that day when this initiative would have arisen out of the circumstances of expediency.

Sir, what we do discuss today is a model of governance, which is a developmental tool and from that perspective, I strongly support this Resolution intended to give effect to Protocol V. It is an innovative and new model of governance, which we apply to important matter of industrial relations practise in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a situation where we are practising democracy. This initiative also represents part of the process of maturing with respect to our democracy. We are a democratic society, which is growing and maturing. We are not an old democracy but I believe we have established a reputation for being one of the better practising democracies in the western world and even farther afield in the wider world.

Mr. Speaker, to the extent that we can mature in this process and to the extent that this type of mechanism can contribute to that process of maturing, I think is a thing to be hailed, fostered, encouraged and where possible to be improved. Sir, the fact that this mechanism comes before this august Chamber as a matter for discussion and debate and to find added legitimacy is quite appropriate and in place. I feel myself, therefore, privileged to be a part of this discussion.

H81/15:10

Sequence 25

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: We are in the business of consensus building when we speak of expending our democratic traditions and culture here in Barbados. This mechanism of the Social Partnership with the Protocols which are applied to the way that Social Partnership is pursued and practised, gives us the opportunity to arrive at consensus around matters of serious importance to the life and well-being of all Barbadians alive today and those to follow in our wake.

Sir, we improved the process of democracy and as we improve on our traditions, whether we speak with reference to the affirmation of our rights by judicial order, as has been the case in Barbados in recent years; whether we talk about the continuing expansion of free expression; the process of consultation, which is also an innovative phenomenon taking place in Barbados these days around very important matters; whether it is health, tourism, general economy, consultation with respect to those who are limited by certain disabilities or consultation revolving around the interest of the aged; the process of consensus building and

consultation is something to which we have been drawn in more recent years. I think that is part and parcel of a democracy, which is maturing, a work of some art which is still in process, and this mechanism is but an expression.

Sir, from that perspective I want to support this Resolution. We are dealing with a model of governance and not just some mechanism designed to achieve some nefarious end in the minds of some persons.

We have to deal with a lot of challenges in the industrial relations. In the world of industrial relations, we are an economy which is somewhat dependent upon foreign investment, and significantly so. Once you have that circumstance where an economy is dependent upon foreign investment to any significant measure, you will find, especially in this day and age with the power of the multinational and of the spread of the transnational, that there is imported into your industrial relations context - a culture which is, perhaps, alien to you, from time to time - aspects of industrial relations practices which are foreign.

Sir, we have the imported culture which comes attendant with the presence of transnational companies, presenting challenges to tripartism and to social dialogue. Therefore, in this regard that we could have effected and practiced over the past twelve years this type of dialogue within this type of frame, such as encompassed by the Social Partnership and the attendant Protocols, we have in place the mechanism to help us deal with those cultural practices created by foreign presence, which is established among us and which significantly impacts the lives of our workers and Barbadians.

Sir, whether we are dealing with large companies such as Cable and Wireless or

smaller entities such as Brown Sugar Restaurant, the fact is, we do not want entrenched in Barbados(industrial relations alien practices which are undesirable. Whether we are dealing with a large transnational firm, the medium sized regional company or the smaller size locally established business entity; when those practices are alien to our industrial relations culture, then we need to be sure that we have in place such mechanisms to properly address those things.

Sir, though we have individual labour union entities very much at the forefront ensuring that type of practice does not become entrenched in Barbados, we are in a better position well within the context of a social partnership governed by Protocol Five. We are now in a better position to deal with issues such as that type of imported alien business culture that we do not wish to become a prominent feature in Barbadian society. This, therefore, helps us towards that cause.

Sir, the world in which we live today, the world of business and industrial relations practice is characterised by rapid change. It is a world characterised by serious levels of competition. Where you have those two dynamics operating, fast-pace change and serious levels of competition, there are often instances of convergence of interest, but you will find just as often and, perhaps, even more frequent instances of conflict of interest.

How do you address the matter of convergence of interest? How do you address the matter of conflict of interest? I think that Protocol Five and those which have preceded it and the Social Partnership frame in which those Protocols are applied, are designed to enable us as a society, a Government and people, to address the matter of the conflict of interest which inevitably will arise with change and competition.

Sir, the Social Partnership establishes for us a clear framework for dialogue. I do not support the view of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that this dialogue must be inimical to the interest of one party to the Social Partnership or the other. The Honourable Member seems to hold the view, that this type of set up is inimical to the interest of the workers. There is no evidence to justify this state of affairs. I do not think that anyone is suggesting, that we have yet evolved this system or mechanism to the stage, where it is perfect. Certainly, there are problems that must be addressed and issues that must be dealt with.

However, to suggest that the Social Partnership in terms it has been applied today and the protocols in terms of the way they have been applied, with reference to that partnership, to see that these things are inimical to the interest of the workers, I do not think is not an argument which can be honestly supported and it is one certainly to which I do not give any credence.

Sir, I think that the convergence of interest of Government, the private class and the working class of Barbados, is clear as we pursue the national goal of development towards a better quality of life for our people.

I think that we need to continue to ensure that we give, insofar as that position is tenable, legitimacy to this mechanism. I think that the track record of the Social Partnership over the past several years, especially in the last eight years, would suggest that there is a proven legitimacy, which is attached to the mechanism.

Sir, the issues of supersession are real issues. I do not necessarily support all of the examples cited by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and Leader of the Opposition, but certainly the matter of supersession is one which would engage our

interest if we have to be honest.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of the time people talk about victimisation, especially with reference to the workplace, the public sector. They speak with reference of victimisation at the hands of the political directorate. I think I have been around Government long enough to recognise that there are, perhaps, even if only apparently so, too frequently instances of victimisation of public servants by public servants who operate at a higher level. Perhaps, that is a matter to be addressed.

Victimisation in the public service must not always be seen as relative to the political directorate; but they are those who operate at higher levels in the Civil Service who victimise and who keep almost subdued, persons at lower ranks in the public service, whose opportunities are being stymied and whose energies are being stifled because of personal grievances and decisions made by persons who are in positions higher authority over them.

H81: 15.20 p.m.

Sequence 26

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 27, 3:20 p.m.

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

I think this partnership has attracted legitimacy to itself over these years. We need to affirm it and I think the approval it finds when it comes to this august Chamber helps to give it that legitimacy in the minds and in the eyes of people.

These are some of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, why I would want to support this Protocol Resolution which is before us. There are a couple of objectives which are clearly cited that

are of critical interest to the social partnership as outlined in this Protocol. There are goals which the social partners hope to achieve by reference to the Agreement signed under Protocol Five.

One of them is the notion of decent work and it is something which is gaining, in growing terms, currency when one talks about the industrial relations traditions which obtain from state to state. Certainly, there are globally accepted criteria by which this thing called decent work would be defined. Mr. Speaker, though there are these globally accepted criteria, I would want to think - and I am sure you would agree - that the notion of decent work must find its fate in the local culture. Sir, although there are criteria applied universally across the board, certainly there are certain criteria which we would want to see made prominent when we make reference to our own traditions, our own culture, our own value set and value system.

Decent work is the objective which is the pursuit of the social partnership as identified in Protocol Five, not just work, not just a job but decent work. What is decent work? It is about ensuring that the job one is called upon to do, and it is in part ensuring that the job that one is called upon to do is a job pursued in circumstances which preserves a sense of dignity of the worker and that the circumstances are not such that this sense of dignity is eroded or diminished.

Therefore, whether we make reference to the material circumstances of the job, whether we make reference to the industrial relations circumstances of the job, whether we make reference to the psycho-social circumstances of the job, at the end of the day, we want to ensure that our working population is engaged in an exercise which can be legitimately classified as decent work, both in locally and in internationally recognised terms.

It is about ensuring that worker marginalisation is not camouflaged - because worker marginalisation in many places is camouflaged - by underemployment of the kind that continues to keep people pauperised, so that although they are in fact engaged in work activity, it is such that they are still marginalised because of the impoverished nature of their living circumstances, in spite of the job that they go to faithfully from day to day.

We do not want to see that type of camouflage existing in Barbados. I think what I see, read and hear coming out of the words of this Protocol, is that one of the objectives of the social partnerships of Barbados is to ensure that there is decent work and that workers in Barbados are not marginalised because they are engaged in the kind of labour that keeps them impoverished and pauperised in spite of the fact that they are going faithfully to their jobs.

Persons must not be engaged in such casual and precarious employment endeavours that they have no security of tenure. I think this Government has led by example in this regard. Already it has been referred to in this Chamber in the debate of Government(s) initiative in recent times of ensuring those four thousand workers within the public service, who laboured long as servants of the Crown, without the status and benefits which should have attended such long years of service, have now come into a new privilege because they are now properly categorised as servants of the Crown. They are entitled to the same benefits that their colleagues in service have long been entitled to so, that persons who were being considered as simply casual workers are given a status which suggests greatest seriousness and permanency of their tenure, enabling them to come into a better economic situation. I think this is a thing to be lauded and it is very much in keeping with the whole notion of ensuring

that people are engaged in decent work.

Therefore, decent work, Mr. Speaker, goes beyond the physical environment in which you are made to operate but it speaks to all those other circumstances, which serve to enhance the quality of the service you render in the cause of national development. It is about moving from subsistence, someone has suggested, to existence and that is the essence and the thrust of helping people to find decent work, moving them from mere subsistence to meaningful existence.

Mr. Speaker, persons put their sweat equity into the endeavours of various enterprises and companies and organisations and they must be seen as not simply labourers in a factory but people who are contributing equity to the viability of the company by rendering the sweat of their brow. It is equity not to be devalued and therefore such persons must be facilitated in that move from mere subsistence to meaningful existence and the equity of sweat they put in, must count for something.

Opportunity must be expanded and not withheld. Energies must not be stifled but persons must be given the opportunity to grow within the companies even as those companies grow. If we are engaged in any enterprise, in any endeavour for any organisation or company, and that company is growing but there is no sense of growth which we are experiencing, then we are not engaged in decent work and that is my humble submission.

Mr. Speaker, it must be about being productive in the job that you do, and productivity must not relate to the quantum of output of the company overall. It must not simply relate to the ability of the company to grow its profits but productivity must relate also to the sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that a worker can find on the job as he or she pursues that job. He or she must feel that he or

she is engaged in productive, gainful, self-fulling endeavour so that the company is viable but that one(s) existence also is meaningful and the effort that one put in is viable.

The dynamic of alienation traditionally has been present and prominent. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East can tell you much about this matter of alienation, as people put in their sweat equity in capitalist enterprises and produce, maximising profits for their employers, while at the same time, feeling a strong sense of alienation from the end product and certainly from the profits, and that is something to be addressed.

Sir, any endeavour in which one is engaged, if it is to be called decent work, cannot be the kind of endeavour that produces a sense of alienation to the worker, while at the same time making the company profitable and producing hefty profits for the employer. I think, therefore, the social partnership must be about changing that, and Protocol Five cites that as part of the objectives.

This notion of decent work is critical to economic stability, social harmony, and investment attractiveness. Therefore, if we want to see an economically stable marketplace and social harmony existing around us, then we have to ensure that people are involved in decent work. This will translate into an attractive investment climate, which we need in order for the country's best interest economically to be served.

House 81, sequence 27, 15:3014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

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

Mr. Speaker, the whole business of poverty reduction is challenged when people are facilitated in finding and occupying themselves

in decent work. Mr. Speaker, you know very well as I do, that poverty reduction and poverty eradication are two of the prime objectives of the Government that sits on this side of this Honourable House. Therefore, this is all part and parcel of addressing the misery of poverty which still exists in our land.

Mr. Speaker, I read some statistics recently, which cited the level of poverty which exists. Clearly, we would admit that there is still a problem there, but then again that is why we have Government and that is why this Government is so postured with respect to the business of wrestling to the ground the ugly demon of poverty in the land, which still plagues the lives of many, and therefore our poor people must be engaged in decent work.

Mr. Speaker, the last point which I would like to make reference to in terms of one of the noble objectives cited in the Protocol has to do with the matter of support for small businesses. Mr. Speaker, if we are going to move working class people from poverty, from a position of lack of ownership, lack of capital and a position of distant relationship, to the means of production, then we need to ensure that we support small businesses. It is small enterprises in part which help to bring working class people into empowerment. Small business is very much about maximising potential for niche marketing. Therefore, small economies like Barbados must more and more look to this matter of niche marketing.

Sir, it is really the small business enterprises which can really capitalise on niche marketing either abroad or at home especially in terms of the services and products that they can offer to some of the larger enterprises operating. It is part of a strategy toward wealth creation.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is serious about the business of spreading and creating wealth among those who traditionally have

been the non-wealth people in Barbados. Small businesses would help to that and therefore, I support this precept as expressed in the Protocol.

Mr. Speaker, the new opportunities within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, offer tremendous opportunity for small businesses through the right of establishment and so forth. Therefore, this Protocol must also be examined in the context, of the fact that the industrial relations context which traditionally existed with us here and existed within, substantially so, the borders or the contours of Barbados, is now to be extended and expanded as we go into the matter of a CARICOM Single Market and Economy. The spirit of innovation, creation and knowledge-based industries, the creative economy, the technology markets and the expanding services environment, all create a better day for small businesses. Therefore, to the extent that the Protocol supports that, I support the Resolution.

I thank you.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would want to apologise to my colleagues on this side, not because I do not support some of the views as espoused by them in their speeches thus far but because I hold a peculiar sensitivity to the issue of social partnership, tripartism, collective bargaining, collaboration and notions such as those I have just mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, if you go back to the Prices and Income Protocol of 1993, and you flip the back of that document you would find my name somewhere imbedded across the last page as one of those persons who signed the Protocol then. Twelve years have past since that momentous occasion. Sir, I had the privilege over long nights and days of working with the other partners in trying to fashion a process, a set of principles, a set of ideals even, that

would have taken this country through some of the most difficult periods that have ever been visited on it.

Sir, one could say that initial endeavour planted the seeds for the kind of germination which one saw in the growth that has resulted over the many years in some aspects of the Barbadian economy and society. In fact, in an International Labour Organisation study done on social partnerships or the protocols relevant to Barbados, a Japanese, Tayo Fashoyin, working for the International Labour Organisation, spoke to what he termed, (The Successes Relative to Barbados). He looked at both the qualitative and the quantitative results of the Social Partnership agreements starting right back in 1993, and working in the two subsequent protocols at the time in which he did his study.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want us to believe that basically the Statement of Intent and the general provisions of all of these protocols over time are by themselves written in granite. We would want them to be, but in fact there are not, and in many instances they are open to the interpretation of all the actors who were involved in the production of the protocol and those who seek to interpret the protocol for their own ends and by others for the collective good of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, that is why as I said I would want to apologise to my colleagues because of my peculiar sensitivity to this particular issue. I do not believe that as we seek to work our way through the most turbulent periods of the 21st Century that we could abandon such principles and processes as protocols. I firmly do not believe that and I will argue very strongly that we should not. I believe that our society has to work to find meaning and purpose within this world.

Sir, if we could fashion systems which can

make our society work regardless of what borders we reach over or of whose hands we clasp, we must work in that manner to achieve the kinds of objectives, goals and solutions, which are important for Barbados. This is my first interest and my first interest that I will continue to pursue.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I apologise, but I am sensitive to these notions, they are important. I came from a village that I would want to return to but unfortunately the land no longer exists, so I have to move to the new plantations of Barbados, but the village is still within my bosom and I still understand the systems that we use in the village as people walking up and down and sharing.

Mr. Speaker, a protocol is nothing but a transition of the village notions, icons and systems. You have intellectualised and codified it in a document to make it useful and workable. I am not saying it is perfect. In fact, there is no perfection yet because Christ, even though present in our bosom, has not come in his manifestation, let us understand that, so it is not perfect. The first document was not perfect either, yet it worked in a very substantial way, as I told you by Tayo Fashoyin when he spoke about it.

House 81 Sequence 28

3:40 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I am quoting

(Despite the immense success of the agreements at the national level, the author is of the view that the effective transmission of the agreements to lower level bodies and institutions, should be encouraged.)

The writer suggested a crucial need for education and sensitisation to the provisions of the protocols and their impact.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is where our protocols have substantial difficulties, just like many other systems and ideas within our country, where the percolation, the drifting down, the sifting down within these ideas to engulf the minds and hearts of our people, do not get sufficient notice or purpose. Therefore, people are disconnected from what is set up at the macro level for it to reach the micro level.

Mr. Speaker, the ideals are there, one cannot remove oneself from them and therefore I would want to see the whole idea being looked at. Sir, the world itself is built on ideals. Sometimes the practicality of fashioning and making those ideals work can sometimes hit difficult barriers, but I think here in Barbados we have the skill, talent and knowledge and that all we need is the heart to work towards the resolution to many of the difficulties that we have in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, no one can fault the General Provisions where it is said at page 23:

6.11(The Social Partners agree that labour disputes will be reduced in circumstances where there is a strict observance of best practice in employment relations, particularly with respect to the following:

(a)provision at the commencement of employment of a written statement of all relevant particulars of that employment, including the name and address of the employer and a clear description of the job.(

Mr. Speaker, we have had instances in this country where people did not know who they were working for, which is an important idea inscribed in the General Provisions.

Mr. Speaker, there are some persons who treat the various protocols as though they are separate and distinct documents or ideas, rather than treating them as a set of processes and principles which are part of a deliberate continuum worked out by those entities within the Social Partnership. I see it as part of a continuum. Therefore, when we sat and discussed it, that is how I conceptualised it and wrote about it. Therefore, the passion that I feel from the early beginnings still continues right through.

Mr. Speaker, I have no interest in who are the architects. What I am concerned about is how can this move all of our people together towards stated objectives for this country. I am not interested in personalities or institutions, but in what good the total entity can be derived from such an effort and exercise.

Mr. Speaker, Costa Rica and the Irish Republic in particular, a country within the European Union environment, that we now say has grown by substantial leaps and bounds, has a very sustained and well- developed Social Partnership and tripartite relationship. Therefore, should we, as former colonial people, with our various shades and complexions, move away from something that we have fashioned because there are some difficulty with portions or segments of it? No, we do not throw out the baby and the bath water together. What we do is that we retain the basin, the baby and change the bath water because that bath water might have become murky. Mr. Speaker, therefore, my Honourable colleagues are correct in many instances when they examine some of the murkiness of the bath water. Therefore, what do we do? We clean the basin and replenish it with clean water.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes one gets a disconnection between the various principle players and the various individuals who form those bodies, on the one hand, and the members

of the wider society who feel no commitment to adhere to the various principles, processes and practices of the protocol. That is the point I was speaking about. That is the trickle down I am talking about. Therefore, there is a responsibility on the Social Partnership to carry the process beyond the mere writing of the document, to the education of the people in our society, so that they understand that this is one important pillar on which we can stand and on which we can work. This is why I would want to impress this upon the architects of this Protocol.

Mr. Speaker, there are difficulties. The representative for Christ Church East spoke to what I would term a nasty episode in the Social Partnership, in the collective bargaining arena of Barbados. It is one when I encountered it on the news, that I made one declaration only. I have not yet revisited my mind because there must always be a period of punishment for sin.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister has enunciated a position of Government relative to companies and businesses who would want to deny the citizens of Barbados the right to freely associate in defense of their rights and the rights of their colleagues. I thought that those days of ignorance and anti-collective bargaining postures were things of the past, but the most recent episodes in our country by the principals of a well-known restaurant, to write into their terms of workers engagements, some of the most offensive clauses of anti-labour behavior witnessed within recent times, must be abhorred.

Mr. Speaker, there is no better place than within this Parliament, to say to those persons and to those who are of similar views, that they are treading on some of the most dangerous grounds in this country. Sir, this behavior has occurred before and good sense had prevailed when confronted with the punitive response, which would ensue as a result of this behavior,

but I do not think that we should have to go this route.

Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with persons looking and respecting the rights of workers, workers respecting the rights of employers, employers respecting workers rights relative to the paying in of national insurance and income tax contributions to the Government? This is a simple matter of respect of their particular rights within the Social Partnership.

I do not believe that one should have to resort to this type of behavior and action, using punitive measures but if it becomes necessary, then it must be done. I do not want to pretend that there is no hostility to the presence of trade unions within the workplace. In fact, many of the faces who now act against the rights of workers, are among many of the faces whose foreparents hid Grantley Adams under their skirts on the plantations of Barbados, during the formative years of the Trade Union Movement in this country.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, the assumed status as members the entrepreneurial class make them far-removed from the realities of the working class and the working poor, and this is a tragedy because they themselves are the products. They had their genesis in the bosoms of the pond grass pickers of Barbados.

H:No81(29)350 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation... Mr. R.D. JONES: Therefore, as they move to expand, potentially, fattening themselves and making themselves ready for takeover, that there will even be more gnawing and gnashing of teeth within this country. We have to have free and fair competition among our businesses.

Sir, it offends me when you have the unnecessary intervention of the State to protect those businesses that are failing. We have some young dynamic progressive businesses that are traveling the world, seeking ideas and finding solutions, but sometimes are stymied by the actions of government entities and situations.

Sir, under Incomes Policies, when you check Protocol Five of the Social Partnership, the identical words keep reappearing in Protocol after Protocol. For example, under the Incomes Protocol 7.13 (a):

(There shall be a general restraint on increases in basic wages and salaries in both the public and private sectors, the example being set by those in receipt of the highest levels of remuneration so as to establish a practical and realistic basis for the general call for wage earners to exercise restraint.)

Sir, all of us exercise some restraint at some time, but there were spoken to by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. There must be room for those who are at the lower level of both salary and wage earning in this country to improve themselves.

There was a time when there was a narrowing of the gap between the top and bottom of the scale within the Civil Service, that has started to widen again. There is nothing wrong in remunerating your senior employees but we must pull others up also to share the bounty that is provided within this country. We must pull them up to ensure that their children are fed; that they can pay their bills and pay their rent to the National Housing Corporation. All of these things must be done to ensure that this document, ideals, processes and techniques are not just words that are written and placed aside, but that they become living and dynamic entities within our economy and society, and

that the initial exercise of 1993, which was part of this continuum, which has arrived at Protocol Five, would be an important lesson in the development of Barbados and for the future of our people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael East.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak briefly in this debate. It is a very challenging one and while I would like to respect the genuineness of the Protocol, I have the mental challenge of facing the realities that outside the parameters of the Protocol, there are usually clandestine imports from the business sector in dealing with matters of the State. That business sector has a very special mental framework that guides it in relation to its attitude towards persons in politics, especially politicians.

Sir, while we sit within a tripartite arrangement, I believe that I must be cognizant of this because at the end of the day, I still maintain that since many of the persons in the business sector are no longer part and parcel of the body that governs this society, they have a perception that the politician is just utility and could be used as a special agent to further their own business interest in terms of profit.

I also believe, whether this is universally accepted, that the business sector believes that it should do all it could within and outside a protocol system to ensure that it has agents within the framework of governance to ensure that its business interest is looked after.

Mr. Speaker, I have drawn the conclusion that in many cases, subconsciously, politicians are trapped into a capitalist framework. I am sorry to use that word again but it is the fastest word that is coming to my mind. Very seldom

there are politicians emerging in this hemisphere, especially in the history of Barbados, who look at a radical alternative from the interest of capitalism. Whether it is a capitalism that is grounded in a firm industrial base or a service economy, the reality is, the business sector still continues to set the framework for the direction of the future of the society.

I believe that we have to be conscious of this and I also believe that we are not conscious of it. Even in the Protocol there is a suspicion by people like me that they believe that they should set the guidelines for the development of this society. It has its external influences as well and its capitalist impact on the society challenges the social planks which we have put into the society over a number of years. We have to guard against that.

Mr. Speaker, where we are today stems as a consequence of the development of our history. There was a time, more so from the third quarter of the 20th century- when the trade union movement became a legitimate institution - when there were challenges to the absolute dominance of capitalism; as a result, there were a number of social adjustments. We must never, in an attempt to set up a new configuration, divorce ourselves from understanding the development of our history, if we are to be very clear at understanding what is the intended path of that historic grounding that took us from the 1930s until now.

Sir, we have always been fighting for a level of equity in the distribution of wealth. How much have we achieved in terms of that distribution is still questionable, because there is still a substantial number of people in the society who are low income earners and there is another group of persons who are described as the unemployed. The question is, how do we transform a society to fulfill our dreams? Most of us dream and speak every day without

any profound analysis about the principles of equity and equality.

H:81 16.10.m

Sequence 31

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 32, 4:10 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

If we are to stand on those planks then we are calling and dreaming about a society that is grounded in the principles of egalitarianism. Sir, the question still remains, can we achieve that? We have no doubt in our minds that the best society for civilisation is one that is of a socialist nature but all states within the region, which have made any attempt to put the mechanisms in place for that kind of transformation with all the economic adjustments and the managerial skills, we had to face the interest of US and European hegemony, using the military force to deter us from going the alternative path of socialism or egalitarianism.

Sir, what we have to do is settle for a compromised position in the form of a protocol, giving some legitimacy to the business sector, that people do not vote for, to sit around a table in a tripartite arrangement and fashion the lives of the electorate of the society itself. It is really the best that we can do at this point in history. I am not condemning it but I do not want to give the impression that it is a model that is so sacrosanct that there is no opportunity for an improvement in its framework.

I do not believe that it addresses the concerns of all sectors of the society. The unions speak for its union members, the business sector speaks for a separate sector of the business

sector and the Government speaks for whichever constituency it chooses to speak for but the reality is that the framework excludes other persons with an interest in the governance of the State.

The Prime Minister selects the person to represent the Government(s interest and the business sector has a say in a position, where the people on a million occasions rejected the business sector in terms of looking after their interest. You now have a configuration that ought to be subject to contemporary thoughts of what type of framework is necessary at this point to bring a broader body of individuals and entities into that framework called a protocol.

I believe that it is too limited. If the business sector could sit on it, this Backbench could have a representative sitting on it. If the private sector could sit on it, I believe that outside of the union and the employer class that civil society should have a legitimate right to sit and express the different interests of the various sectors of civil society.

There should not be an individual that speaks about health sitting on the body, or one person speaking on every subject matter on the body, but there should be a flexible form of accommodation within the framework of the Protocol so that when there is an issue relating to a specific interest and there are state representatives with the necessary competence, they should have not an accommodating status within the framework, but a legitimate right to sit within the protocol system-the body of the tripartite-to express and defend the interest of that particular group of persons. Those are some of the things that I am concerned about, Sir.

The disrespect and the limitation demonstrated themselves quite recently, where between the union and the other two partners, they held a common position within the tenets

of the Protocol but persons from outside of it believe that they can enter into contractual arrangements and exclude the interest of the workers. Sir, it says something about our society.

I believe that what we have to do is to ensure at this juncture that there is a legal instrument that protects the right of the Trade Union Movement. In this particular area since 1938, no dispensation has brought legislation to Parliament to make it mandatory that any investor whether it is local or expatriate, respect the union as a legitimate workers(institution and one of the institutions that was responsible for development of this society. We need to bring legislation of that kind.

If we believe that as a consequence of bringing that legislation, it is likely to harm us in attracting investment to the society, then CARICOM must come together and develop certain standards in the societies, across the region so that all CARICOM countries could take a common position in demonstrating to the entire western world, our respect for the concern of the workers of the Caribbean.

I believe these are some of the innovative concepts that need to be considered and put in place because what we have been witnessing over the last few years, whether it is the Millennium Goals or the Protocol that relates to the parochial situation, are some very noble and interesting concepts. Sir, but the lack of the power to enforce these concepts, to make them work and to move them beyond a dream or a concept to something that is pragmatic and can be applied, we have not seen the encouragement when persons demonstrate the will and the courage to come up against economic power and the normal principles that seem to guide capitalism, to isolate those who try to perpetuate and promote these virtues.

Therefore, we have to be committed to our

historic path and mission. We could not be here today if the arm of the Trade Union Movement never emerged in the 1930s. We could not be here today if the Barbados Workers Union did not develop the strength that it has and that it developed over the years. We are watching major challenges to the labour unions in the region. We have at one of the leading hotels in our country, a manager who wants to set up within the business, a special committee that listened to all the concerns of the workers and that committee which will be guided by management must not have any connections with the BWU or any of the unions, but must represent the interest as a small united committee within the workplace. This is a new model.

Therefore, while we are putting new mechanisms in place, these industries like the hotels are setting up workers(committees within the hotel to talk to management on behalf of the workers.

House 81, sequence 32, 16:2014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

What that is doing is breeding a whole group of (lackies(in the workplaces who know that their life and survival rest with looking after the interest of management, while pretending that they are looking after the interest of the workers, and most of the time you get manipulations and deceit going on as a consequence.

Mr. Speaker, we have to protect the interest of this society from that. We are the beneficiaries of the very people that are becoming the victims of the changes within the system. We do not only have to think about the workers, we have to think about our people. The Protocol might not address this because it

does not deal with profit, but it has something to do with the harmony, the stability and the level of crime within the society.

Mr. Speaker, what about those persons in this society who are unemployed or who are underemployed, the term that they use? What about the observations of the increase in vendors in the society? The Protocol must go beyond the clear areas that it has highlighted because we have a serious problem that comes from what I call illicit labour within the workplace or within the society itself where persons are forced to do things because there is a necessity to survive.

We have to ask ourselves what happens to large families with small incomes and persons who are unemployed. If we are concerned about every segment of the society, the question has to be asked how do these people survive because they have to eat every day, they need somewhere to sleep, so the cost of food or free food must be a consideration. That is why we have in the area of agriculture praedial larceny where young men go into people's kitchen gardens and then sell the vegetables. These issues are all tied in. You are talking about the dynamics of a society and those planks within the Protocol cannot divorce itself from these other social concerns because it touches on the different forms of crime.

Sir, that small tripartite unit is really involved in the total package of governance and it is involved in a package of governance that exclude other vital elements within the society from participating in setting of the policy for the governance of the society itself, that is my concern about it. It touches on crime and on social behaviour because if you alienate persons from within the marketplace in terms of labour, then they are unemployed and they still must survive. It relates to the rents at the National Housing Corporation, especially if you have employment for one month and

unemployment for three months. That is why we have young men running about the street calling themselves (paros) and stealing small items. This is a new cultural behaviour that emerged from trying to survive. Whether it is dysfunctional or not they still have to survive and they survive by stealing.

Mr. Speaker, when you isolate people from the workplace you are also talking about an expansion in the area of prostitution. These are considerations that we must examine and these are considerations that the decisions of the tripartite body indirectly would preside over. So while we are debating issues at this level of Parliament, Opposition Members and Backbenchers are excluded from the governance of the society and this new configuration makes a laughing stock of an Opposition and a Backbench and other partners that ought to be included within the system.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see a radical transformation. Only last night, Sir, I was delivering a speech at the Hilton Hotel to the National Council for the Disabled and they had a number of concerns, one of which was accessibility. Sir, I am saying to you that while I give credit for the evolutionary path of this document, respecting it from the first protocol and the kind of expansion that we have witnessed, as we look at Protocols One to Five, we are constantly seeing an expansion of the objectives. It keeps expanding but is now holding a very high status in the governance of the society itself and we have to guard against how extensive that power of governance goes because sooner or later it will have greater influence on the society than the elected Members of Parliament who come here as a consequence of the people to represent their interest.

Mr. Speaker, when we begin to get confused about our roles as representatives and subconsciously abandon our duty to the people,

that is where the danger steps in because some of our heads become so large that we forget that we are here to represent and we believe that we are here to dictate.

Sir, I am very concerned while supporting this because the business sector has always been very clever and believe that they are cleverer than black politicians. From the time they held people in captivity they believe that these lesser mortals never had the acumen or the ability to understand even when they are being manipulated.

Sir, I do not want to be a victim of the phobia. I believe that we should constantly keep an eye on the Social Partners. I am not so scared of the unions because I know that the unions are trying to survive in a hostile environment, but these are the realities. If they do not want to acknowledge and respect that, that is a matter for them, but that is my view and the view of many persons. The unions have to survive in a hostile capitalist environment that will do anything to ostracise them from governance in the system.

Sir, the business sector believes that it is moving in a clandestine and latent manner in manipulating the process of governance in the society and no one seems to be conscious of it. My call is for persons who are involved in setting up the new structures that are necessary... because sometimes a structure or an institution becomes obsolete and it is no longer effective because capitalism has its agencies and its intellectuals that shape them and tell them how to get around exploiting labour, whether they are exploiting it through science or technology or whether they are dismissing workers because they feel that if they employ manual labour, they are going to have a woman staying at home because she is going to be sick or a man at staying home because his children are sick and that a machine or some instrument does not have

those kinds of problems. They find ways and use and abuse intellectuals to design new mechanisms to get around that. So labour is always under a great threat and is the first sacrifice in a capitalist system.

House 81 Sequence 33

4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

Mr. Speaker, I genuinely do not believe there is any one of us here who believe that the capitalist system is the best system for us within the society but we are conscious of the threat to any effort for radical transformation from it. Therefore, we settle for a compromise of governance in what we call democratic socialism, so that we can get a nice massage from it but in the meantime we are threatening the social services in the society.

Mr. Speaker, anybody who understands the type of society in which this modern Barbados was born or was developed out of, and the rites of passage of its development, can understand why it is a necessity for us to protect those socialist planks. Sir, that is why I have mentioned a number of things, such as the interest of the disabled in the society; the unemployed who must still survive; vendors; a system that breeds gambling, prostitution, criminal activities, and all kinds of new forms of pervasive behavior, which come as a consequence of the social and economic pressures in which persons must and will live under, as long as capitalism puts its pressure on the society itself.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has one minute in which to conclude.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I respect

the development of the Protocol. I understand where we are going with it but I am saying that it is lacking in its objectives and too restrictive in its structure. If the structure is expanded, it would be very clear to me that the objectives would be even broadened and the pragmatic application of those who are involved, would be able to address more and more issues in the society. As it is now, there are too many important entities that ought to be involved in the framework, which are excluded at this present moment.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, there will no doubt come a time when, in adopting a detached posture, some person would check the Hansard debate of this very day and evaluate the many contributions made on the Floor of this Honourable House, with an aim to establishing the justifications on which Honourable Members have spoken, for this debate has reached a considerably high level.

Mr. Speaker, I am attracted to an exceptional contribution made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, where the Honourable Member declared that after the first Prices and Incomes Protocol, there was no real need for other protocols to follow. Sir, the risk the Honourable Member made in making that very bold declaration is that the Social Partners would no doubt wonder if they were not being used for a short period for their consent to be gained and, thereafter, for them to be abandoned.

Mr. Speaker, another possible interpretation is that the Honourable Member could have been hinting, more by an innuendo than by a direct statement, that after the Prices and Incomes Protocol was developed and worked, that since there was a change in Government, there was no need to press the Social Partnership into service on that change of Government. Sir, I am adopting benign

constructions to what the Honourable Member has said.

Mr. Speaker, naturally I cannot agree with the Honourable Member, especially in view of the fact that a far more enlightened contribution came from his side, sometime after he had spoken. In that enlightened contribution, it was said that there should be symbiotic relationship between labour and capital, and that set the tone for the continuance of this Social Partnership as we know it.

Mr. Speaker, during the course of this debate, I also heard that one entity in Barbados has permitted its workers to become shareholders in that enterprise. Sir, this reminds me that between 1974 and 1976, Tom Adams had proposed a system of workers participation for this country and had set out to ensure that system of workers(participation should be established and entrenched in labour relations in this country.

Mr. Speaker, could it be that Tom Adams proved both to be a prophet and a man before his time? Sir, even though his notion of worker participation had not, at that time, been accepted in Barbados, lo and behold in recent times in Europe...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this House. The Honourable Member is quite aware that at the St. James Group of Hotels, there was a man named Mr. Matherson who had practised workers participation there, a long time before the Honourable Member came to this House or a long time before Tom Adams. In that respect, Mr. Matherson allowed his workers within the hotel group to get part of their bonus as shares.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the former Honourable Member for St. Thomas, Tom Adams, fought to

establish worker participation as a general norm in this country. Therefore, all the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is saying, is that in a number of isolated instances, just as another Honourable Member has said, some entities favoured worker participation.

Mr. Speaker, however, I must tell this Honourable House that consistent with a far more enlightened contribution being made by another Honourable Member on that side, who spoke to the issue of the Barbados Light and Power Company offering shares to its workers, in recent years, there has been, in the developed world, the concept of co-determination. Sir, co-determination is a philosophy consistent with worker participation but not to the same degree that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East has said. The Honourable Member spoke to conspiratorial efforts where so long as workers refuse to join trade unions, they were then permitted to launch a committee and directly deal with management.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East was saying that such a relationship would be grounded in Ulyssean duplicity, especially in a situation where the workers were being forbidden from taking part in trade unions.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of co-determination is one that is very much based these days on information and consultation directives, which are issues within the context of the operations of the European Union, where, generally speaking, each workplace employing a certain number of workers should have a committee. Sir, this would be unlike the one the Honourable Member for St. Michael East was talking about, which would be a go-between workers and management and which would be consulted on matters affecting workers rights.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East made bold to say that sometime in

February 1998, there had developed a problem here, where Government had to insist that this right that workers have to organise and to associate with the institutions of their choice, is an inalienable, a sacrosanct and a non-negotiable right.

Mr. Speaker, you would no doubt permit me to speak about what the Honourable Member and my colleague were talking about when they mentioned the incident that happened here on February 04, 1998, where an ill-advised entity came here with a policy to exclude workers from being able to work with institutions with which they would want to associated, for the protection of their rights.

H:No81(34)440 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

Mr. Speaker, of interest, existing within the laws of Barbados is Cap. 361, the Trade Unions Act. Sir, I cite Section 40(a) of the Trade Unions Act:

(An employer who -

(a)dismisses a workman or adversely affects the employment or alters the position of a workman to his prejudice because that workman -

(i)is or proposes to become an officer, delegate or member of a trade union,

(ii)being a member of a trade union which is seeking better labour conditions, is dissatisfied with his condition,

(iii) has absented himself from work without leave after he has made an application for leave for the purpose of carrying out his duties or exercising his rights as an officer or delegate of

a trade union and such leave has unreasonably been refused or withheld, or

(iv) takes part in trade union activities outside or, with the consent of the employer, within working hours.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East said that in a portion of the 20th century that efforts were made to curb policies that were anti trade unions. Sir, out of what I just quoted, the work combination is mentioned. Prior to 1875 in England, trade unions were considered unlawful combinations and were always presumed to be acting in conspiracy not only against employers but against society as a whole. This Act was originally passed in 1964 but amendments were made over time. Sir, Section 5, which I will cite, was passed in 1964. It says:

(An agreement or combination by two or more persons to do or procure to be done any act in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute, shall not be indictable as a conspiracy if such act committed by one person would not be punishable as a crime.)

Sir, supportive sections did away with the notion that trade unions were combinations operating for illicit purposes. Sir, I found it necessary to set these provisions in support of the argument well-advanced by my colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, and by arguments, which resonated in this Chamber and, in considerable degree were supported by other Honourable Members who spoke.

Mr. Speaker, in the context of where we are in Barbados today, it would be wrong for anybody to contemplate that because they have existed a Social Partnership in Barbados going back to the 1990s, that automatically in consequence of this Social Partnership that a utopia would emerge overnight but nothing can

be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, some spokesmen from Her Majesty's lawful Opposition were suggesting that we have the Social Partnership and the Protocols but that we have had problems a, b, c and d. Sir, it would not be fair in a debate like this or in the streets of Barbados to suggest that because we have an entity based on the principle of tripartism that every issue or concern affecting Tom, Dick or Harry would dissipate overnight and that utopia or Nirvana would descend on us, we would be caught in the clouds and experience such and existence that we would live trouble-free, problem-free and such like. It is unfortunate that a few Honourable Members on the other side who spoke suggested that the Social Partnership has not gone towards curing all the ills of this society.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Social Partnership is not inconsistent with the doctrine of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which was founded in 1919 before the modern United Nations system has evolved. The ILO has for years been trumpeting the policy of tripartism as a necessary prerequisite for social peace and stability in all countries that make up the ILO. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke of the information and consultative directive that the European Union has launched for the purpose of encouraging co-determination and greater dialogue between workers and employers. Sir, permit me to say that the ILO for years has been urging members not only to practise tripartism by involving Government, employers and workers but also encouraging a system of what is called social dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, there are times when, of necessity, tensions erupt and in consequence of these tensions, emotions are worked up and sometimes in consequence of these worked up emotions, irrational behaviour results and if not irrational behaviour, a form of aggressive

behaviour that does not truly bring about a positive resolution.

Mr. Speaker, against that background, the policy of social dialogue, especially in a post-colonial Third World country, must be founded on mutual trust to such a degree that the three participants in the tripartite process must work with each other in an atmosphere where they take each other in their confidence and work in the interest of the country.

Sir, the first Protocol, the Prices and Incomes Policy, as has been said, was a product of dire necessity and in large measure can be said to have saved Barbados from a considerable amount of pain. All commendation must go to all those persons who had the foresight in the early 1990s to see that there is a process by which conflict can be minimised. Quite frankly, the first person I have heard talked about social partners was Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford from the fair village of Porters, St. James, who ascended to great heights both in this Parliament and country.

Sir, initially when I first heard the concept of social partners, without in any way being cynical, I was curious as to how social partners would engage each other. In time, I was to learn that the suspicions that might exist in the absence of collaboration among the Social Partners, would reign supreme and then the hostility, mistrust and such things would go against the grain and norms of this society.

Sir, it must be a credit to all in the Social Partnership, whether employers or workers, that close to 25 years have elapsed since last there was a general strike in Barbados. If my memory, Sir, is not deceiving me, the last general strike was one involving the Barbados Telephone Company in 1980, which I would call Giles affairs. There was never since then a general strike engulfing the port, the airport and bringing our economy into a crisis.

Asides.

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Sir, a general strike is one engulfing the whole country where the port and airport are shut down and where essential services are affected. Sir, a localised strike is a little thing in a locality. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members must know that Baroness Thatcher - I am saying this for the education both of Honourable Members and of Barbadians generally. Sir, Baroness Thatcher was after a man called Scargill at a time when Britain was involved in the Falklands, which has history to it as well. A man called Arthur Scargill had been able to set up a strike that was never-ending. Sir, Margaret Thatcher, as she then was, passed a piece of legislation banning secondary strike action, which meant that if institution A had a dispute, institution B1 or C1 could not express solidarity and strike. Sir, this represented a severe blow to trade unionism in Great Britain.

Mr. Speaker, she also did other things. She passed laws permitting members to be super (malicious). Sir, I am using (malicious) in the Bajan dialect even though the rules of this Honourable House would require me to speak English.

H81/

Sequence 35

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: She got trade union members to be so inquisitive about the trade union activities, when it came to the management of finance, that she succeeded in making many members lose confidence in the financial management of their trade unions, and in Britain trade unions have never been the same since the days of (Thatcherism).

However, in the context of Barbados, until this moment, consistent with the arguments advanced in particular by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central - I have been slow in giving him commendation - we had a system of volunteerism here where when a dispute occurs, the parties to the dispute sit down at the table, try to hammer out their differences and try to come to an accord based on agreement.

I want to assure that while this able Barbados Labour Party administration remains in office, that principle will never be undermined and the rights that workers have fought hard for, since the riots of the 1930s, will not be diminished but increase in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, talking about increase, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central spoke earlier about a very real problem in this country, and it is a problem we will address. There were efforts by the Barbados Labour Party under the Tom Adams and Harold St. John in the late 1984 period to deal with this matter. The matter had lingered between 1984 and 1991. No action was taken between 1984 and 1991 and beyond. However, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central said that it is painful that many Barbadians go to work who cannot really and truly identify their true employer. That is a fact, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, we have a culture where a business may register corporately and in the process name itself, then have a trading arm with a totally different designation, and the employee might assume that immediate person on location is the agent of the employer, but if something happens affecting the discipline or the rights of the workers and they sue the agency immediately visible to them, they are going to be shocked that behind that, the agency has a completely different name.

Sir, when the final stages of consultation of the Employment rights Bill is passed, that will be corrected and employees will be able to demand the particulars of the employment including such things as hours of work, ground rules and who the true employer is, et cetera.

Sir, a meeting was held last week and I trust that by the middle of January 2006 all of the consultations on this important matter will be completed. I believe in the near future, if all goes well, this Parliament would be able to entertain once again an Employment Rights Bill, which would cure some of the difficulties faced by employees, difficulties as outlined by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Sir, I never proposed to speak at this length but some of the highlights of what Protocol Five is mandating can be mentioned briefly to show that it has decided to accept that the time has come for a better regime for the disabled. This Protocol is also committing the social partners to preventing child labour, sexual exploitation, et cetera. In the context of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, our social partners will endorse policies which lead to the free movement of labour throughout CARICOM; the efforts of governments towards introducing proper health and safety measures would be encouraged and other matters like Cricket World Cup 2007; the growth and development of the Credit Union Movement; moral support for consumer groups and many other things will also be encouraged in Protocol Five.

Sir, this Protocol also endorses the efforts of the National Insurance Scheme to modernise and reform our pension system. This is particularly important because as was said on the Floor of this Honourable House, we are into the spectacle of an aging Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in my lifetime, between ages 14 and 20, a centenarian was a rare species. In the last three or four years, centenarians abound, so many centenarians are reaching that important milestone that they are signaling that this phenomenon called aging is really occurring.

However, at the same time, as people are growing older, notwithstanding the ravages of HIV/AIDS, cancer and such like, because the birth rate in Barbados has been steadily declining, by the year 2059, if you hold the influence of migrants constant, Barbados(population could decline. If you assume that Barbados is going to become the most desirable place in CARICOM, which to many it is already so, then if you assume that migration intensifies, then migration can lead to either a population stabilisation or a net increase of the population beyond what the demographers might consider to be the optimum for Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I make these comments in support of the outstanding opening speech made by my colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East. I notice that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central did signal that he was going to differ from his colleagues, but his contribution so stood out, that even though some of his colleagues might have wondered precisely what he was saying when he said that he apologised to them for the stance he took, my interpretation and evaluation of his contribution does not only give it a passing grade, but it stood in stark contrast to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy(s contribution, a contribution that this Honourable House could have done without.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East will now wind up.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, in light of the very well-rounded presentation by the distinguished Honourable Member for St. James North, it really just remains to thank Honourable Members who have contributed to this debate. Indeed, this dialogue, which this Parliament had today, on this compact for a protocol formalising and further expanding the relationship between important aspects of our society, would put the social partners on firm ground, and in some instances firm notice, concerning the interest, priorities and perspectives, which this Parliament has on the partnership. I am sure that the view expressed here today would certainly influence and inform the work of the social partners during the lifetime of the Protocol.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank Honourable Members for their contributions and I beg to move that this Resolution do now passed.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

H81: 17.00 p.m.

Sequence 36

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 37, 5:00 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 13

On the motion of Hon. R.C. EASTMOND, seconded by Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. R.D. MARSHALL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee of Supply.

HEAD 13 - PRIME MINISTER(S OFFICE - \$30 000

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the amount requested under the Prime Minister(s office under Head 13 is simply to provide for the annual grant to Codrington College for two years, which would not have been processed at the end of the last financial year and was omitted by mistake in this year(s annual Estimates of Expenditure and Revenue and therefore it is simply to correct that mistake. The amount normally would be \$15 000 a year, hence the \$30 000 for the two years.

I beg to move that Head 13 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 19 - MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS -

\$ 46 435

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the amount of \$46 435 is simply to meet the corrected bill that was received from the consultant, which is being provided by UNCTAD in relation to the ASYCUDA project with which this House has been made familiar already, over the course of the last few years.

This is to deal with effectively the public expenditure and budgetary management programmes of Government in order to allow for a more efficient framework for revenue

collection.

I beg to move that this Head stand part.

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

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

HEAD 46 - MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND PUBLIC UTILITIES -

\$32 239 703

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, the amount requested for the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities covers a few programmes.

The first one \$31 865 is to cover the rental payments for the rest of the financial year. Colleagues might remember that the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities was established just after the last elections and as yet, we have been unable to get a permanent home for a secretariat. I have been fortunate to be given space at the National Petroleum Corporation and the amount being requested is for us to meet our rental payments to the National Petroleum Corporation for the rest of the year. The second item of \$98 342 is to meet the Other Personal Emoluments for those members who joined the Telecommunications Unit during the course of this financial year. Mr. Chairman, colleagues will remember also that with the Government(s progress in telecommunications sector reform in Barbados, it required the scope of work and the form of that work of the Telecommunications Unit to change immeasurably as we move further and further into the liberalisation programme, it therefore became absolutely necessary for us to engage the services of new persons in the Telecommunications Unit.

We submitted an institutional strengthening proposal to the Ministry of the Civil Service and we were able to get the following posts: one Senior Telecommunications Officer; one Telecommunications Officer I; two Telecommunications Officers II; and one Senior Clerk. The monies being requested is to meet their payment for the remainder of the financial year.

The other item which is related to that is \$8 904 and this to meet the National Insurance Contributions of the officers just mentioned, who were recruited to the Telecommunications Unit during the course of this financial year.

Mr. Chairman, the biggest item under Head 46 is the subsidy of the Transport Board and this amount is of the order of \$32.1 million. This is being requested to cover the operating expenses of the Board for the rest of the financial year and to pay outstanding bills to meet its obligations to the travelling public.

Mr. Chairman, the Transport Board has reached a milestone really. It is celebrating its 50th year of existence this year. I am certain that all my colleagues in this Honourable House would want to congratulate the Board for reaching its 50th year of providing transportation services to the public. Despite the many challenges which the Board had to face and the many challenges which the Board continues to face, we should all agree that it has stood the test of time with great resilience and a strong commitment to serving the Barbadian public. Sir, 50 years in the life of any institution or any person is something truly to be remarked on and certainly for that institution to be commended.

House 81, sequence 37, 17:1014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Chairman, out of that \$32.1 million, which is requested, a sum of \$3.3 million is to meet payables accruing to the Transport Board until the end of July of this year. These are amounts owed to companies and agencies that provide services to the Transport Board. Simpson Motors is owed \$0.889 million. SOL (Barbados) Limited, which took over the contract from Shell for the provision of fuel and diesel to the Transport Board is owed \$0.69 million. United Commercial Autoworks Limited (UCAL), which is the entity responsible for the maintenance of the buses of the Transport Board, is owed \$379 000. The main overseas supplier of parts and supplies is owed approximately \$500 000 and an amount of \$0.884 million is owed to the National Insurance Board. That gives a total of \$3.33 million.

Mr. Chairman, when you add the \$16.75 million that is required to meet the operational requirement for the rest of the year that would bring you close to \$20 million. Sir, included in that \$32.1 million is an amount owing to the Inland Revenue Department in the order of \$7.8 million. The two remaining items in this amount would be for bus repairs and refurbishment.

Mr. Chairman, let me speak to these two items. At the moment, the Board is experiencing some difficulty in making available the requisite number of units on any one daily basis to make the travelling public happy. What we are seeking to do is to move the number of available buses in any one day from around 135 or 140 units closer to what can be considered a more appropriate peak vehicle requirement through this bus repair/refurbishment programme. What we are hoping to do is through the expending of this \$2 million to repair a further 55 buses to the point where they can be made serviceable again. This would move the peak vehicle

requirement of those that are available for daily service from the 140 units closer to a more desirable level of 180 to 190 units in the not too distant future.

Mr. Chairman, this would put the Board in a better position to service the routes, which they long to do at this point in time, and will also put the Board in a better position to maximise its revenue intake while at the same time putting it in a position to provide more services to the school children. We are hoping to launch into this repair\refurbishment programme with the access to this additional \$2 million that is earmarked for this programme.

Mr. Chairman, I mention earlier that an amount of \$2.19 million is being earmarked to make a retroactive payment to UCAL, so let me explain why this amount is necessary. My colleagues would recall that a decision was taken some time early in 1997 to move the responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the buses off the books of the Transport Board so to speak. That is, the mechanics and the other service persons that were employees of the Transport Board up to that point were moved off the books of the Transport Board. Around that time a decision was taken to establish United Commercial Autoworks Limited and the workers who were previously attached to the Transport Board were given shares in that company. Sir, in order to get the company off the ground, a decision was also taken to let that company have first claim of the work of the Transport Board. That first contract was for a five-year period expiring at the end of July 2002.

Mr. Chairman, the relationship between the Board and UCAL continued on a rolling month to month basis and what we have been able to do was to formalise that relationship through arriving at a new contract between the Transport Board and UCAL. The form of this contract is slightly different to the previous one

but in the main there is a commitment on all sides to ensure that the repair and maintenance programme of the Transport Board is done in a more professional manner and that the interest of UCAL is best protected.

Mr. Chairman, in respect of the hourly rate for the repairs and maintenance of these vehicles, what existed in the first contract covering 1997 to 2002, was about \$55 per hour, so that beyond 2002, stretching up to 2005, with cost increasing for service providers like many others in this Barbadian economy, one would appreciate that an hourly rate of \$55 fixed between 1997 and 2002 would not be appropriate between 2003 and the present time.

Mr. Chairman, what had happened, nevertheless, is that because the relationship between the Transport Board and UCAL continued on this rolling month to month basis, the first contract guided the continuation of that relationship, so that when the new terms and conditions were determined, it was necessary to pay some attention to the hourly rate. Sir, both sides have determined that there was a need not only to aim and to agree for a higher hourly rate going forward but that from the period January 1, 2003 to when the new rates took effect that there was a need to make a retroactive payment to cover those years as well. The total sum for the retroactive payment amounted to \$2.19 million and the new hourly rate going forward, I should mention, is \$75 fixed. That would take care of the period January 1, 2005 to July 31, 2007. House 81 Sequence 38

5:20 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

Mr. Chairman, it is no secret that the Transport Board has had to undergo some

trying times. It is also no secret that the Transport Board provides a very valuable service to this national economy. It is also no secret that this Government has made a determination that given the strategic importance of the Transport Board, in order to maintain its existence, there will be a need, on an annual basis, to provide some level of subsidisation.

Mr. Chairman, it is also the case that the Transport Board is inhibited in its attempt to maximise its revenue intake because of the limited availability of its units. Sir, in order to raise revenue, the Transport Board engages in a number of things, such as increasing its ridership, advertising, charter services through components of the tourism sector and rental of buses for social and recreational events.

Mr. Chairman, the ability of the Transport Board to generate revenues is crucially dependent on its availability to make available serviceable units. Therefore, implicit in this request is the quest of the Transport Board to do just that. This request also recognises that the Transport Board has had to deal with increasing costs, not in the least the increase cost inherent in the repair and maintenance programme in its relationship with the United Commercial Autoworks Limited (UCAL). We now look forward to the programme which has been formulated by the Transport Board, in collaboration with UCAL, to get these additional 55 buses serviced and becoming operational. We look forward, with some degree of eagerness, to this programme being implemented with the greatest degree of effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr. Chairman, from time to time, all of us do get calls and complaints that the Transport Board is unable to hold to its schedule. We hear, from time to time, the inability of the Transport Board to make their services available, at a time that can move the

commuters around and in a manner that will make them comfortable. Therefore, I think it is incumbent on all of us, that given the social responsibility of the Transport Board and of this Government, a responsibility which we hold to very seriously, this subsidy being requested should be given our support.

Mr. Chairman, I should also say that notwithstanding the trying circumstances within which it has had to function, the Transport Board has been doing its utmost in order to contain cost, where such could have been done. It has been difficult but we still have to do it. Therefore, whenever possible and with funds permitting, we have been able to introduce new systems in order to improve the operations and efficiency of the Board, as we seek to do that.

Mr. Chairman, for example, the Board has been able to instal an electronic ticketing machine and fare-collecting system. It has been able to effect a rationalisation in its Operations Department, with the view of minimising and reducing the payments for overtime. It has been able to introduce improved administrative and operational systems, which have come in the form of improved and additional policies and procedures, to ensure the safety of the Board(s) fleet. It has also purchased and installed vehicle monitoring systems on all buses, to monitor performance and to improve efficiency, thereby reducing cost. It has also been able to equip the buses with speed-limiters, safely limiting bus speeds and reducing the possibility of accidents due to speeding.

Mr. Chairman, as I have said earlier, to some extent, we have been able to eliminate the number of overtime hours, through the reallocation of staff and through the re-organisation of the Operations Department. We have been trying but the important point I want to make is that there is only up to a certain limit we can go in an operation such as this, in

respect of cost containment. There are some costs that will increase, and this is the nature of the functioning of the economy and how certain processes are being done. Therefore, in recognising that, the Transport Board cannot shield itself from wages cost or from increases in the cost of fuel, occasioned by the high prices of oil and petroleum products.

Mr. Chairman, what the Transport Board would need to turn its attention to, hence the need for this subsidy, is to look at the other side of the equation, that is engaging in revenue enhancement measures. Sir, as I have said earlier, what drives the ability of the Board to increase its revenue is the availability of serviceable and properly functioning units.

Mr. Chairman, with those few remarks, I beg that Head 46 stand part.

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

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I want to say from the outset that it has always been the policy of the Democratic Labour Party to support subsidies for the Transport Board where those subsidies are needed.

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that this Supplementary is substantial. Therefore, one would have thought that the Honourable Minister would have justified the reason this Supplementary is so high. Sir, when one considers that this Transport Board also involves an Energy Ministry, one would understand that the Honourable Minister is taking with one hand and giving back with the other.

Mr. Chairman, one of the main reasons this Supplementary would be so high is because of a decision taken by this Ministry earlier in the year, to substantially increase the cost of fuel to the Transport Board, which caused it to come

to this Parliament today, seeking an increase in subsidies because this Ministry has increased the cost to the Transport Board. I would have thought that the Honourable Member would have told the Honourable House the effect of the increased cost to the Transport Board or the effects to the increases in fuel to this particular department.

Sir, there are about 18 reasons, and we must understand the reasons. We must look in a rational way at what has occurred at the Transport Board. It is no doubt that the Transport Board has:

(1) Interfered with the production of the economy;

(2) Increased the Current Account deficit of this country;

(3) Helped to create unemployment in this country;

(4) The high cost due to fuel has not only impacted on the Transport Board but on commuters.

H:No81(39)530 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

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

(5) It has created a problem for the police whereas the Transport Board is allowed to take more passengers, its competitors the ZRs and minibuses cannot do likewise.

(6) It is creating problems for the ZRs and minibuses because it is not operating efficiently and is forcing the ZRs and the operators of the minibuses to have a heart who must stop to pick up people at the bus stop because it impacts on their jobs.

(7) it has caused the number of reconditioned cars and new cars to increase in Barbados.

(8) It has impacted on the foreign exchange because of the bad roads which the Transport Board buses must travel which causes them to spend large sums of money in spare parts which also impacts on the current account deficit of the country.

(9) The Transport Board should, on a daily basis, satisfy the needs of the commuter but the buses they go to the airport and seaport and take away from the ZM buses et cetera.

(10) They are now major players in the tourism industry creating social problems within Barbados because they are depriving the taxi drivers from taking home money to their families.

(11) They have created a problem for the Minister of Finance because whenever he presents Estimates, it means that he presents Estimates with one figure but the Honourable Member comes to the House projecting a certain expenditure pattern only to realise that later on he has to bring a supplementary even though he does not like to bring supplementaries to this House.

(12) It has impacted on the hospital because of the stress created by the Transport Board on the commuters have caused many of them to be hospitalised.

(13) The Insurance Act has been amended by this House which by rights the Transport Board argued that it could take more people on board because the insurance covered all the passengers. This argument was used by the Transport Board, one that I have supported and which I will continue to support. I believe that if there is an accident that every passenger travelling on the bus is covered by the Transport Board.

Mr. Chairman, since the Insurance Act has been amended, the same thing applies to the Insurance Act and the ZRs but yet they cannot do the same thing which the Transport Board is doing.

(14) Lateness. Because of the bad conditions of the roads, the high fuel cost, the drivers at the Transport Board cannot manoeuvre as they would like. If they drive at the recommended speed with the number of potholes on the road, it would damage the buses which would again increase the cost.

(15) This has to do with the blockage, and accessibility and the smooth movement in traffic management because the buses cannot manoeuvre as they used to. The flyover to be constructed would not create another problem for the Transport Board because they would be stuck in traffic, thereby idling before continuing on its journey. This would create increase expenditure for the Transport Board all because the Ministry is now split and it is creating problems.

(16) There is anger among school children because they cannot get to school on time. They are caught up in the transport system which creates stress for them which they take out on the seats and windows of the buses.

Mr. Chairman, I was taught in school that human beings breathe in oxygen and give out nitrogen but because of the constant idling of these buses, it is impacting on the environment of Barbados, which is creating problems not only for human beings but for plants. This is why we are not seeing the plants and trees on the highways because the emissions are creating environmental problems.

Mr. Chairman, 50 years at the Transport Board should have seen the opposite of what occurred here today because there should have

been efficiency after 50 years and we should have seen a better Transport Board. Sir, it cannot be management, it has to be the policy of the Government because management did not increase the fuel cost or incurred the expenses because of the spare parts, potholes et cetera. Traffic management has to be a policy of Government so the management at the Transport Board cannot be blamed.

Mr. Chairman, management cannot stop ZRs from helping to move traffic on the roads. Again, this has to be the policy of the Government. We want to know, after 50 years, what is on one positive thing that at which you can point your finger which the Transport Board has done for Barbados. Sir, it cannot be the Board or the workers but the policy of the Government.

Mr. Chairman, we want to know what new policy of Government would be put in place to make sure that all the things which I have spoken about would be corrected. Sir, I represent a rural constituency and every day the commuters from that constituency have problems. They have to go on excursions on morning and evening. The only saving light is that there are joined by the people of St. Peter which is represented by the Prime Minister of Barbados.

H81/17:40

Sequence 40

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: ... Sir when they complain, I say to them do not worry, the people of St. Peter have to go through the same problem, so it has to be a national problem if it is also happening in st. Peter.

Sir, the Transport Board must understand that the reason we have over two thousand vehicles in St. Lucy today is because the people of St. Lucy are not getting the service from the Transport Board, creating social problems in St. Lucy.

Sir, the number of persons purchasing vehicles would previously have taken that money for a piece of land, build a house and perhaps buy a vehicle in that order. The reverse is now happening. People are forced to purchase vehicles but because of high cost, they can no longer purchase a piece of land or build a house in rural Barbados.

We need to have a proper transportation system once more in rural Barbados, for people to continue to use the buses from the Transport Board as a first choice. With an unreliable transport system, they are forced to spend foreign exchange, however, with the use of an efficient transport system we can save the country that foreign exchange.

Sir, when I made these observations previously, one thought that I would not have been able to make the connection. Sir, many of my constituents have been displaced by employers because of a shoddy and most unreliable transport system.

Sir, you reach the bus stop at 6 O'clock but at 8 O'clock the Transport Board has not yet arrived and at that stage it might never arrive.

Sir, do not force my constituents to make a decision. Allow them to continue with the good practice of purchasing land, building a house and then the luxury of a vehicle. However, their priorities are in the reverse. We do not want to spend our money on vehicles when other people come to Barbados and own land.

Sir, the first call of any worker should be the

right to buy a piece of land. No government should have a policy to force the preference of a vehicle before that of a house. People have to understand that this is a very serious point. We must correct the problems of the Transport Board. Sir, for future workers to avoid the problems of former workers, they must have the choice of purchasing land before a vehicle.

I am calling the Honourable Minister to recognise that the fuel increases he inflicted on Barbadians and its impact on the Transport Board, has forced it to come to this Parliament for subsidies of such large sums. I am hoping that when the Honourable Minister speaks again that he would deal with these issues and correct the problems at the Transport Board. It is not for the Board to correct them because they have been inflicted by the Honourable Minister and comrades on the Transport Board.

Thank you very much.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this Supplementary. This is a very important item of expenditure. It is, in my estimation, an important investment which the Government needs to make in seeking to ensure that Barbadians are able to travel and from work, school and play. Indeed, one of the important considerations in arriving at the decision to grant this \$32 million is a reality that not only are we facing increased commuters, once you have unemployment at the low rate that it is, approximately 9 per cent, obviously there are more people traveling seeking to get to work. I think there is approximately 138 000 persons employed. You have in the region of 48 000 primary and secondary school children and another 11 000 at the tertiary level. Therefore, there are approximately 60 000 students travelling as well.

In addition to that, there are persons who attend evening classes and other activities. There are five secondary schools, which provide evening classes from 5 O'clock through 8 O'clock, Foundation Secondary School, Springer Memorial School, Lester Vaughan Secondary School and St. James Secondary School. Sir, at these schools, persons attend to expand their education.

Sir, we have approximately fifty-eight national sporting associations registered with the National Sports Council. When it is not volleyball season, it is netball, football or darts season, a range of activities. Essentially, Barbados is a very busy place. On weekends when it should be quite, there are more churches than any other institution in Barbados. As if that were not enough, the range of services which are provided in Barbados are provided at an ever expanding basis, not only in the variety but the kind of service. Barbados does not shut down at 8 O'clock or 10 O'clock at night, sometimes it does not shut down at all. Therefore, persons who are either providing services in the tourism sector, hotels, restaurant and entertainment, who are not engaged in clubs and other activities, they require transportation as well.

Sir, the situation of rising fuel, insurance and other operating costs make it more difficult. It is my view that the Transport Board cannot be treated as a plain commercial enterprise in the stricter sense of the word. It provides a commercial service, but because of the value of the input of that service to other aspects of production in our country, I support the continued subsidy for our public transportation system.

Sir, that perspective is not unique. Around the world governments have recognised the value of ensuring that affordable public transportation is available to keep the wheels of

commerce moving; to keep the society moving; to allow people to choose freely where they want to live and work without having to relocate merely for purposes of work. Sir, this is, therefore, the background against which I see this investment.

I want to speak from two perspectives. First, I note that in this Supplementary there is the provision for the refurbishment of fifty-five buses to return to full service, forty of which require some repairs and fifteen which were, to use the benign expression, cannabalisised.

I want to appeal to the Transport Board because on applying this increase number of buses, they would be satisfying two needs for me. First, at the Ministry of Education, we have worked closely with the Transport Board on the provision of dedicated school bus services on mornings and afternoons for our children. There are 103 public schools in Barbados, 23 of which are secondary. Most of the primary schools are still in walking distance of homes. Some persons might take the bus, but there are usually along a straight line route to their school. It is merely at the secondary level that there is great movement around the island.

H81: 17.70 Sequence 41

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 42, 5:50 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. R.R. FARLEY:

We subsidise the rates that students pay so a student passenger travelling on the Transport Board Bus is worth the same amount of money to the transport Board, \$1.50. The students pay \$1.00 and we pay the 50 cents. The issue of provision of a school bus service therefore, Sir, is not a situation in which the Ministry of Education will become a second bus company. We run schools not buses. We hope that with

an increased number of buses available to the Board that they will be able to add to the services they already provide and I certainly want to thank them.

In fact, Sir, they have shown some creativity in the provision of those services. Those school bus services are not necessarily restricted to existing routes so that there is a school bus service that runs from southern Christ Church, in my constituency, to Princess Margaret School and Lodge School because there are quite a number of persons from that part of Christ Church who attend the Lodge School but there is no commercial bus service running there.

There are services that criss-cross the island in unique ways and I want, Sir, to strongly support an expansion in the number of buses available to the Transport Board so that they can provide this service. I want to say though that it is not fair to the Board to suggest that cases in which students end up on ZRs, mini-buses and other forms of private transport, relate exclusively to an unavailability of the service.

One morning, our School Attendance Officers, five of them who patrol bus stands and get the children moving, as well as personnel from the Board, reported to a school in the north of the island that there were children from that school who were dropped off in Bridgetown by their parents to catch this dedicated school bus service that was available. The students lingered around and did not catch the bus.

The school bus left the bus stand with less than capacity. Sir, these children were ultimately photographed so that they could be identified because as you know, when you say these things people do not believe you, but they made a choice. Sir, by the time they reached school around 10 o'clock, the Principal was

already aware of whom they were and he was waiting for them.

Therefore, in making this request for additional buses, I am not doing it from the prospective of laying blame at the feet of the Transport Board, but just stating facts that we do need to ensure that there is an adequate school transport system, and we could take a stronger regulatory line concerning removing the option of taking one means or the other to get to school. This is an important consideration as far as I am concerned, in putting the Transport Board in a position to provide the full services.

Sir, wearing the constituency hat, I am concerned that the Transport Board is still not able to provide all of Christ Church and certainly not all of Christ Church East with a full bus service. There are some specific routes. Indeed, Sir, even going back into some of the areas that I formerly represented, Lowlands, Lead Vale and Coverley, where by way of relocation, some persons from Fairy Valley have gone over there, some may say they have gone from the frying pan to frying pan because Fairy Valley faces the same challenge.

There are some districts which are able to take a bus that passes their route. For example, if you live on Pilgrim Road, you can take a Sam Lord(s Castle bus and you are running clear. You get off and you are okay. If you live in Lowlands or Fairy Valley, the distance to walk is so far that if there is not the special bus that goes into your community, you are left at a great disadvantage. I know, Sir, that a number of routes had been either started, restarted or enhanced but the service has fallen off because of the lack of availability of buses.

I am making a particular plea, Sir, on behalf of the people of Fairy Valley especially. The Fairy Valley bus services Parish Land, some 3

000 persons in that community, Thyme Bottom, Wilcox Hill and Fairy Valley. If there is no bus, they have to get off somewhere on Pilgrim Road by the gas station on top of Wilcox Road and walk a long lonely way into their homes.

I am always amazed that a route as busy and as well-populated as the route from Silver Sands to Bridgetown, which used to be one of the routes supplied on a 15 minute basis by the Transport Board, certainly in the 1970s when I used to take that service from school to Bridgetown, that this is not one of the prime routes given service by the Transport Board.

Again, I know they had restarted the service there with some frequency but it has fallen off. It puts people, certainly in my constituency, in a position where they are not able to plan effectively. I trust that this Supplementary will eliminate that situation.

I want to throw the suggestion out, Mr. Chairman, that perhaps we need in seeking to address the challenge of bus service in these communities, to look again at how we utilise our buses. It has always been my view that places like Oistins can be a lovely hub, where you either take an express bus from Oistins to Bridgetown or take a local bus, which will stop along the way but smaller buses can be used to circle right through some of these communities, Parish Land, Fairy Valley, Thyme Bottom, Silver Sands, Enterprise, Gibbons Boggs, Newton and make the transfer at Oistins and on. As I said, I know the Board has shown some creativity with the Oistins/Six Roads route, and I believe there is one that goes to Maxwell and takes a loop around and so on but I want to see more of it. I want the Board to find innovative ways to respond to the changing population patterns.

Finally, I believe that one of the mistakes of our planners, as far as transport is concerned, is

to make the assumption that what we call the developed areas do not require bus transport. Persons living in those developments, yes there are lots of cars there but there are three sets of people who need transportation. There are students, whether secondary or tertiary but tertiary especially, there are persons who work in those communities, gardeners, maids and so, there are senior citizens as well. There are also people in these communities who, in terms of buying their first house might have sold the car to help to make the down payment. Therefore a person may have bought a house in West Terrace, Callenders, Wildey or Chancery Park, which is a new part of Chancery Lane, but because they live in a wall house community does not mean that there is not a need for a bus service.

The reality as well is that new developments, both low income and high income, have developed all around and the Board needs to constantly look at how it provides the services and the routes. Sir, as if the Board is not faced with enough challenges, I want to also make the point that, I believe we have expanded hours of service from around five o'clock in the morning until midnight, but the reality is that with the advent of persons working shifts and services being provided even later and later, I continue to be concerned that there are some persons whose employment put them in a position where they may not be able to get to the bus at midnight.

House 81, sequence 42, 18:0014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

Sir, even where employers provide transportation it is usually to one or two designated points not to the individuals homes. Therefore, on selected routes along the South Coast, West Coast and in certain commercial

areas, especially service commercial areas, we need to provide a bus service beyond midnight, so that persons who are working or otherwise doing business in those areas would be able to have the option along the South Coast going to Bridgetown, the West Coast to Bridgetown and to Warrens and along the populated corridors to be able to use public transportation for their comfort, safety and protection even at those hours.

Sir, I want in closing to support this supplementary and to hope that the benefits of this supplementary are seen soon and very soon in the constituency of Christ Church East, as well as in the transport of our students to and from school.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make this brief intervention on behalf of the constituency I represent. However, I would like to warn that my brevity should not be taken as a signal that the issue affecting the residents of the whole of the constituency of St. Joseph are not serious issues. In fact, Mr. Chairman, they are.

Mr. Chairman, I think we all accept that the Transport Board has some challenges that have been around for a long time and challenges that they are doing their best to resolve so that they might alleviate the problems faced by rural residents in Barbados while waiting for bus transportation.

Mr. Chairman, I regret to say that the initiatives of the Transport Board are hardly being felt by the constituents of St. Joseph. Mr. Chairman, I will say this quite willingly, I had occasion to write to the Transport Board, in fact to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, in his capacity as Minister responsible for the Transport Board, to make certain representations and I will agree that some

efforts have been made to deal with the issues that I have pointed out, but we continue to suffer from a significant impediment in terms of the availability of a Transport Board service and meaningful access to the Transport Board service.

Mr. Chairman, I will not pretend that this is a unique situation in St. Joseph, I am sure it happens elsewhere, but I have constituents who leave home at 6:00 a.m. in the morning who complained to me that they are in danger of losing their jobs because they cannot get to work consistently before 900 a.m. or 1000 a.m. on mornings. Mr. Chairman, it is obvious that an employee who leaves home so early and can only get to work an hour or two hours after the working day has started presents an employment challenge for his or her employer and also a competitiveness issue for his or her employer. Therefore, I am pleading on behalf of the constituents of St. Joseph that they be relieved of this kind of challenge or impediment to their livelihood.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to mention specifically the routes covering Chalky Mount and Sugar Hill. Mr. Chairman, rural residents do not have the luxury of having a multiplicity of buses that will cover or overlap with their routes and they certainly do not have the luxury of a larger number of private transportation options available to them by way of minibuses and ZRs so they are forced to rely on the Transport Board. The challenge is that in an area like Lammings, for example, as I understand it from my constituents, the first bus which would take people to town would be a bus that arrives after 7:00 a.m. and if there is an early bus one that would leave probably around 600 a.m. and you would not find one leaving again until nearly 800 a.m.

What happens, Mr. Chairman, is that you then have in a large residential community where the vast number of people would rely on

public transport, a situation where school children and people who are hurrying to get to work would all be relying on the one bus. In fact, the bus that would go through Lammings will be a Sugar Hill bus which has to go a little further and go into Blackmans.

Sir, I understand that the Transport Board is trying very hard to avoid the combining of routes. By the combining of routes, I take it to mean that so as to allow some districts to benefit they have to almost unnaturally extend a bus route beyond an area that it would normally go. Sugar Hill is (a good(two miles away from Blackmans, but in order to cater to the residents who live in Blackmans and those other areas they are really compelled to extend a Sugar Hill bus which could logically serve just Sugar Hill and Lammings as its terminus into other areas.

Mr. Chairman, this situation, while necessary, is hardly satisfactory and therefore we need to see greater frequency of buses on those routes, especially in the early hours of the morning when you have vast numbers of people all trying to get to town some of whom come into town but then of course have to move out of the city to get to their workplaces in Christ Church, St. James and so on. So it is really a dreadful situation and I am pleading with the authorities to get their programme up where these 55 buses can be brought back into operation so that they can bring some relief to the residents of those areas.

Sir, the other challenge we have is the fact that the buses travelling along the linear bus route would sometimes past some distance from other areas and when the rain is falling it presents challenges for people. Sir, while I would not suggest that the Transport Board drivers in anyway break the law, I can say from my own recollection catching buses to and from school and to and from the university that there was an element of courtesy which I think

we all would like to rely on so that if the rain is falling and an elderly person is running to get to the bus stop, the drivers should not insist - I understand the legal situation - on stopping at the bus stop only, because a quiet pause could well save somebody and allow them to be able to walk away feeling that the Transport Board is a caring and conscientious service provider.

Mr. Chairman, I feel also obliged to mention the Bathsheba route. As a student of the university of Waterford, the Combermere School, the Bathsheba route is one that is well-known to me. I well remember the days of going to and from the Combermere School where we would catch the Bathsheba bus as a viable alternative to the Bush Hall bus. Sir, constituents are complaining that when they finished work at 4:30 p.m. it is pointless going into the bus stand before 700 or 730 p.m. at nights simply because there is such a large volume of people to take the Bathsheba bus.

Sir, one must bear in mind that the Bathsheba bus goes through Waterford, Hothersal Turning, Market Hill, Fisherpond, Tourville Road and Horse Hill and sometimes it is even called on to go into Foster Hall, so it is an extraordinary long route. Mr. Chairman, what is happening is that with just one bus on the hour there are large numbers of people who do not see it as a viable option and for them there is no point going into the bus stand to be trampled over. So I would like to suggest to the Transport Board that they consider, as soon as they are able to, having a second bus if not on the hour, following very swiftly on, so as to take care of the backlog instead of having one bus on the hour which clearly would not satisfy the demand. It is a long route and it presents a severe hardship for somebody who finishes work at 4:30 p.m. who then has to wait until 700 to 730 p.m. to get a bus home on a journey that would take 45 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I support the call for an

express bus during peak hours so that the first stop for the bus could well be mandated to be Horse Hill or going directly into Bathsheba. Mr. Chairman, another problem is that people who live in the areas which the bus travels also catches this bus, and you cannot blame them for doing so. If a bus has to stop at every bus stop and it is going to pass my way, then I will ring the bell and I will get off. So having an express bus during peak hours would certainly be a viable alternative. I think that is an excellent option that is available to the Transport Board.

House 81 Sequence 43

6:10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:Mr. Chairman, I support the Resolution. I would not only like to see these 55 buses being brought back into service, I would like to see more buses brought in, so that we can satisfy that great demand, which is hampering productivity, especially in St. Joseph.

Mr. Chairman, I have constituents who cannot even consider taking a job in Christ Church because the likelihood is so slim that they would be able to get a bus in the mornings, so that they can get into Bridgetown early enough to take another bus to get to that job, that anything outside of Bridgetown is not a viable job option for them.

Sir, I can speak to the fact that I had a constituent who had a job at the Airport but because of her inability to get a bus into Bridgetown and then to cover that distance, it was a job that she had to forego. I am almost sure that lady is still not working and, therefore, her family is suffering a significant detriment, simply because our bus situation,

where, as hard as it tries, it is not responsive.

Mr. Chairman, I hope I have made my point. The officers of the Transport Board are with us today, and I hope that as they go away, having heard this passionate cry on the behalf of my constituents, who are in urgent need of relief, they will address that matter, so that my constituents can contribute, in a meaningful way, to helping our country to be more competitive and to bringing a higher standard of living, so that every Bajan, including those in rural parts of the island, will be winners when they are relying on transportation from the Transport Board.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Chairman, after 11 years and four Ministers, the Transport Board is in the same state or even worst than it was, prior to 1994. Sir, no one can deny this.

Mr. Chairman, we are now being told that there are only 140 buses available per day, but that what is really required to make the Transport Board truly profitable - if ever it could be - would be 250 buses per day. Sir, in fact, the number of buses required by the Transport Board happens to be 310 buses.

Mr. Chairman, there is substantial potential in Barbados, therefore, there is an opportunity within the transport sector, for small business people to become involved. If it is that there are only 130 buses now available and they would like to have 250, that equals 120 buses more. I am saying that there is now real opportunity to further empower small businessmen in the provision of transport services about Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I say that because you would notice that even in the Minister(s presentation today, he has avoided the issues. That is precisely why the Transport Board will not go anywhere under this Government because there is no desire to confront the real issues there. Sir, if you feel that I am not serious about this

statement, you only need to look at the last Annual Report, which became available to us, and read the General Manager(s and the Chairman(s comments, where you would see precisely what I am saying, which is that there is an almost unwillingness to confront issues.

Mr. Chairman, no increase in bus fares from \$1.50 to \$2.00, will solve the problems at the Transport Board. The problems are too huge, therefore, increasing the bus fares, in the hope that it would solve the problems, is not the solution to the issues confronting, or the problems associated with the Transport Board. Sir, that ought to be very clear.

Mr. Chairman, the subsidies that we have seen in the last number of years, the losses in the magnitude of \$28 million per year... Sir, thank God that starting from 2005, there will be a write-off of tax losses to the tune of \$5.5 million, which would graduate to losses being written off by the Commissioner of Inland Revenue, to the tune of \$19.6 in 2013.

Mr. Chairman, I say this because this is an extremely important area for management in Barbados. Sir, not too long ago, we bought 210 new buses, which increased the fleet by 26 buses. Not too long ago, we had a situation in which those 26 buses increased the amount of mileage travelled by the buses in a given year by 11 per cent, while the actual fuel cost over the course of the two-year period went up by 57.6 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, how does management at the Transport Board rationalise increased mileage of 11 per cent over a two-year period, and in a period when fuel cost remained constant, the actual fuel cost skyrocketed from \$4.6 million to \$7.2 million? Sir, therefore, the issues at the Transport Board are not being dealt with and no increase in bus fares will solve the problems there. Mr. Chairman, it has to be the case that Government is willing to understand what

transport is all about and Government has not yet dedicated itself to appreciating what transport is all about within the public service.

Mr. Chairman, I have been on a journey speaking to the issue of social good versus economic good within the last year, and this was not done by accident. Sir, I am not going to give out how we, on this side, feel that the Transport Board should be run but certainly if you appreciate there must be a concentric circle from Bridgetown which, in fact, makes \$1.50, a competitive fare and beyond that concentric circle, transportation assumes a social value, then you accept and appreciate there will always be need for a subsidy at the Transport Board but how large and how best can it be managed are important issues to be confronted.

Mr. Chairman, there is no harm in giving a subsidy but there is need to reduce the inefficiency and haemorrhaging at the Transport Board, but it can only be done if we accept that there are circumstances there that must be addressed.

H:No81(44)620 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation of Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

This Board has been making substantial losses under this Government yet when you check, the employment levels have gone up substantially at the Transport Board in spite of the fact that it is making losses of the magnitude that we are here to discuss and debate this evening.

Mr. Chairman, whether or not we want to believe it, somebody pays for the inefficiencies at the Transport Board and that somebody is the collective taxpayer. Therefore, it cannot continue on the present course because somebody pays for the inefficiencies at the

Transprot Board. Therefore, you have to be willing to confront the issues that really do present themselves and accept that you have to make decisions even as politicians in the interest of people, that there is no free lunch in Government because inefficiencies will cost somebody.

Mr. Chairman, it is not about sending home anybody because if you are accepting that the Transport Board could do with 120 more buses, it means that there must be economic opportunity out there available to the Transport Board but, more important, to my mind, to other Barbadians who are willing to ply their trade. It is similar to what happened prior to 1994. A Minister of Government, under the Democratic Labour Party issued some licences for taxis which became an issue for persons on the other side. When the Government changed, plenty more licences were issued for taxis to the extent that there are plenty taxis in Barbados but, what is important is that taxi men still make money so there must be opportunity in the transport sector for average Barbadians, given a duty-free taxi, to ply their trade and make money. Sir, there are economic opportunities there so do not be embarrassed or ashamed to give anybody a taxi permit. It is one of the best ways to empower an average Barbadian to get him or her into business that he or she could control as a sole trader.

Mr. Chairman, what is being said here implies that they are even greater opportunities within the transport sector for Barbadians to get involved. I am, therefore, not excited to hear that the Transport wants more buses. What would excite me more is to provide greater opportunities for other people who are willing to upgrade their ZRs, as was presented by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, or to get involved in a bigger way in the provision of transport services in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, if we do not want to accept it,

there is a danger in Government becoming too involved in some areas of economic activities. The danger that there is simply nobody responsible. Let me say something that would affect a few. I have no information on how UCAL operates but I know that UCAL is in a very privileged position to repair and maintain buses on behalf of a public transport system without the persons who are driving the buses having ownership of those buses. Therefore, after a bus has been repaired and it is not a private individual who owns the bus, who would really care whether or not that bus goes back for repairs constantly. On the contrary, if that bus was owned by a private individual and went for repairs and maintenance, the private individual would ensure that it would not incur any additional liability or cost associated with the maintenance of that bus because it affects the profit margin of that individual or his profitability.

Mr. Speaker, in an instance where you have buses being repaired for a public sector entity, there is no ultimate responsibility. Therefore, to some extent, you have an operation that determines its overall position. Sir, there can be no justification in an environment in which we are seeking to incur competitiveness and competition for persons not to have a choice.

Mr. Chairman, therefore, I am arguing that there must be persons in Barbados who have the ability to buy one or two duty-free buses who can get involve in the provision of the transportation services in Barbados. Sir, I could go further but I cannot tell a Government after 11 years and four Ministers how to run the Transport Board. We have been thinking about it and we have come up with an exciting approach as to what should happen but, first of all, we have to make decisions.

Mr. Chairman, you cannot have \$4 million in spare parts at the Transport because \$4 million is not two cents. Sir, accountants are writing

offparts which have become obsolete. It, Therefore, affects your overall capacity to manage a sector that is critical to the economic and social advancement of the sector. It is a lot of money and many private sector individuals area involved in the provision of the spare parts. These buses have been bought and in no time they have gone on the line.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Chairman, do you know how much money was invested in buses in the last four years at the Transport Board? Who know the lifespan of a bus at the Board. In fact, the information provided in the most recent annual report is flawed. It says that the Board has improved its maintenance programme, strengthened and reinforced its systems and procedures. It should be noted that 46 per cent of the current fleet is seven years old and 87 per cent is four years old. Sir, if 87 per cent of the fleet is four year old, then 46 per cent cannot be seven years old.

Mr. Chairman, the information provided in the Annual Report is flawed and makes no sense.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, thank you very much.

H81/18:30

Sequence 45

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and to say at the outset that I support this

subsidy of \$32.1 million. I am of the belief that Governments all over the world have to subsidise transport for citizens to move from one location to another. Therefore, it is from that perspective that I want to lend my support.

Sir, I know that the wear and tear of buses are not easy, especially those on the long-haul. You will appreciate that when buses leave to go to Shorey Village, travel along Spring Vale and other treacherous roads, they need to be properly service if there are to take the commuters to their destinations safely.

However, I have some challenges. Many of my constituents suffer on a daily basis. We have limited transportation when it comes to the ZR vehicles and the minibuses, especially those tail-end routes. For example, the Shorey Village bus would take Route 4 that goes through, Sturges, Farm Path, Bloomsbury, Hope Well, Bridgefield and onto Jackson, because persons are living on the tail-end of that Shorey Village route and it is always extremely difficult for them to travel by bus to work, school or recreational activities.

Sir, the same obtains with the St. Andrew(s Church bus, where folk who live in Farmers, Farm Path, Dunscombe, Spring Farm and onto Shop Hill, meet the same challenge. If we go over to the route where the Sugar Hill bus service, Proutes Village, Clifton Hill, Bibby(s Lane, Walkes Spring, Lears and Hothersal Turning, you will appreciate that it is even a bigger challenge. That is why a few weeks ago, I had to make public mention of the (pirates(who are operating on those routes. It is only a matter of time that someone gets injured or killed, before some action is taken.

Sir, the real concern at this time is the complaints that are received daily, and most of them are genuine. People are ready for work and want to work, but because of the bus system, many of them have to beg for a ride, or

leave their homes three or four hours earlier to get to the various destinations on time.

Mr. Chairman, I welcome the expansion of the fleet to fifty-five. I believe that the staff at Transport Board will help me to get two or three more buses on those routes, which will allow the people of St. Thomas, St. Andrew, St. Joseph and St. James a more reliable bus service.

Sir, the proposal to acquire seventy additional buses is also a welcoming experience. I believe that these buses will also service, not only St. Thomas but the rest of Barbados where people are living in communities that are far away from the main road. When commuters stand on streets for many hours, especially at this time during the rainy season, it creates a lot of hardship for them in the rural communities, soaking wet at the bus stop, waiting for two hours, but on reaching Jackson, the road is dry until you reach Bridgetown. Sir, you know the feeling.

I believe taxpayers living in those rural communities deserve better. Of course, if the Transport Board does not have enough buses, we are happy with the few we are receiving but we are requesting more with the expansion of the fleet.

Mr. Chairman, you will agree that many of our senior citizens are unable to get the free ride, because they are forced to use the ZR vans and the minibuses. They have to bend down, ring up, body manoeuvring that old people cannot do and should not be doing in the year 2005.

I believe that more buses on the route will help to alleviate that problem as well as that of small children who pose problems for parents while they have to be lifted into their arms, hips or backs when waiting for long periods.

Sir, I support the ideas for the revenue stream that would help to supplement the Transport Board through advertising. I believe, that is a route that should be pursued to earn money.

I also want to laud the effort of the ticketing machines. Recently, I had reason to make a complaint and was told by the officer at the Transport Board, that as long as the commuter shows the ticket or calls in the number of the ticket, the Transport Board can determine the identity of the driver, the route, and the time the bus was on the road. I want to say that I am happy that kind of system, to respond to the various complaints has been put in place for commuters and that the Board has been creative enough to come up with systems that will help improve the bus service in this country.

I also want to laud them for the vehicle monitoring systems to be instituted to ensure efficiency. Indeed, further training of staff is very pertinent and I know that some of these funds would help to ensure that the staff at the Transport Board is on the cutting edge.

The Honourable Member for St. Joseph spoke about many staff members who were extremely courteous, practising high quality service but further training is necessary to spread that behaviour 100 per cent among the workers.

Sir, the installation of the speed limiter for safety and efficiency, that too is one of the areas to which I would like to lend my support. The less vehicular accidents that occur, the more the buses will be on the road to satisfy the needs of all.

Mr. Chairman, at this time I want to make a case for the residents who live in the heights and terraces. I agree with the Honourable Member of Christ Church East that we must not assume that because they have saved, perhaps, sold their vehicles and moved into

these new communities, that all of them have vehicles or friends that would give them a lift. More often than not, they do not know their neighbours. Therefore, the Jackson bus that has been instituted is really serving an excellent purpose. I want that bus service to be extended to Cane Garden Park and Cane Wood because persons they have to get the Cane Wood or Sugar Hill bus at living at Lears and Bibby(s Lane, they cannot have an adequate service. It is creating some challenges for them.

In the case of Spring Farm, the residents there have tremendous challenges. There are hundreds of residents who need an upgraded service. Sending an additional two minibuses would help but we prefer the Transport Board buses. There are larger, safer and I believe the residents would prefer to have that kind of service.

Sir, when it comes to the folk at Lion Castle and Dukes, that is the case that hurts most. Those residents have to walk for almost a mile-and-a-half daily, in the sweltering sun and heavy rains, with groceries and other commodities which they purchased in Bridgetown. I really want to make a case for them, when these fifty-five buses are on the road, or even the additional seventy, that at least the bus service from Sturges is reinstituted. Therefore, the residents of Lion Castle and Dukes would travel in the comfort they have never experienced. They are taxpayers too and they deserve the best.

Sir, I want to commend this Resolution to all Honourable Members. It is with great gratitude that I commend members of staff of the Transport Board. It seems to be part of our culture to tear down all the time. I believe that there are times when praise is due. Even though we know that they are working and operating with limited resources, there are times when that call is responded to as a matter of urgency.

H81: 18.40 p.m.

Sequence 46

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 47, 6:40 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE:

I want to highly commend them for the efforts they have made to ensure that buses are on the road but for them in getting these new buses to make sure that the dues are paid. When UCAL fixes the buses that they are paid and when spare parts are needed that the same funds will go towards it to ensure the safety and efficiency that are necessary, if our people in Barbados are to remain productive.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, the idea of the dedicated school bus service is pertinent. I am saying that because the Honourable Minister spoke earlier about the Ministry of Education not in the business of buying buses but when we see the children on the road, most of them want to go to school but because the system is such with the limited buses, school buses get there late because they have to be on other routes before or they never ever turn up. Therefore, I know of the hardships that the students who go to Grantley Adams School that live in the communities in the parish of St. Thomas, when they have to criss-cross through Bloomsbury and Sturges into St. Joseph.

Mr. Chairman, the same obtains for those who are going to the Alleyne School another long route and the children who are going to St. Lucy Secondary. We need to perhaps re-look how our children are being assigned to secondary schools to see how we can minimise the criss-crossing.

When the buses are not available, Sir, our

children then get into the other forms of transport and it is not always good for them. When they reach school at 10 o'clock and 11 o'clock, their heads are filled with all kinds of vibes and they really cannot settle. They miss the very early worship that is necessary to have them relaxed and ready for a new day. They also miss the most important lessons in the morning.

Therefore, I believe that the 70 buses that are coming, most of them should be dedicated to the schools to ensure that our children get to school on time and when they reach school, they are more settled because here was no booming in their ears or any smoking of weed in their faces or anything that is negative.

Sir, too many of them go adrift when they get to the bus stand and the bus is not available. Those who are going to Princess Margaret Secondary School, sometimes on mornings they are in front of the Ministry of Education for more than an hour waiting for a specific minibus. Therefore, they are not getting to school on time because there is no Transport Bus to facilitate them. I am making a plea that the school bus system be upgraded when these buses are made available.

I am also making a plea for the residents of the constituency who gave me the honour to represent them, so that they will get an opportunity to be able to get to and from their work, church and recreational activities. They should be able to do their business in an efficient and productive manner with a measure of reliance on the bus system at a particular time or hour.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, I rise to make my second intervention in this debate and from what has been said so far, it leaves me in no doubt as to the importance that Members on

both sides of the House attach to the functioning of the Transport Board.

Mr. Chairman, I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, and I want to say at the outset that I am dissociating myself from the sentiments expressed by him. He did not stay too short of saying it but for fear of how he might be taken and dealt with when he leaves here, he brought it fairly close to his tongue without spitting it out, but the impression conveyed in his speech is that he is prepared to aim for a partial privatisation of the Transport Board.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South is misrepresenting my comments and this explains precisely why the Board is going nowhere. I said, that according to the officials at the Transport Board who were recently on a call-in programme, they identified that the current availability of buses is around 130 to 140 per day. They said on the programme that it would be ideal to get 250 buses and went on to say further that 310 would be most ideal.

I am saying, Mr. Chairman, if there is scope to add an additional 120 buses to the fleet at the Transport Board, given the dire circumstances financially that the Transport Board is in, it therefore means that such an addition to the fleet, as suggested, constitutes an opportunity for Government to perhaps give private sector individuals a chance to ply their trade within the transport sector.

This does not talk about privatising anything, Mr. Chairman, I am saying simply that it had been shown that even with 130 buses, the Transport Board is making losses of the magnitude of \$24 million a year. If you are not careful and there is further inefficiency at the Transport Board, the additional fleet may also cause losses rather than enhancement.

Therefore, it provides such an opportunity. Do not misrepresent me for political reasons.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, I am not misrepresenting the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, and let me explain. In my first intervention, I was very clear to point out that the ability of the Transport Board to generate much needed revenues is hampered by the lack of availability of an adequate number of serviceable units on any one day.

I also said, Mr. Chairman, that to the extent the Transport Board is able to bring back into active service, an additional 55 buses through the estimated \$2 million repair and refurbishment programme that this would lead to an increase in the ability of the Transport Board to generate revenue.

Mr. Chairman, the peak vehicle requirement of the Transport Board cannot be met at the current time and the officers of the Transport Board who were on the call-in programmes are correct. The officers may have alluded to the fact also, or should have alluded to the fact, that access to more serviceable units, pushing the number close to the peak vehicle requirement would obviously allow the Transport Board to generate more revenue from such things as an increase in advertising and increase in the charter services.

I am saying that the addition to revenue would be way in excess of any incremental cost associated with putting those additional buses on the road. Therefore, for the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, to give the impression that by not allowing the Board to move from its current serviceable fleet of 140, closer to the peak vehicle requirement in circumstances where there is an inefficient repair and maintenance programme, would obviously push the Transport Board to the optimum point of generating revenue.

It is obvious that if you are moving away from the peak vehicle requirement and the calculations which would have been done, based on your potential for a revenue intake at the peak vehicle requirement, all other things being equal, would tell you that this would be the optimum point at which revenue could be generated.

House 81, sequence 47, 18:5014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

If we do as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is saying not to put the Board in a position to move to that peak vehicle requirement which is the optimum point of profitability or revenue generation, but instead to give private operators an opportunity to ply their trade as he is saying, what is that equivalent to. He is saying that is not equivalent to moving a section of the Transport Board out to the private sector but all of the others in here could obviously conclude that if we are not going to get the chance to put...

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: On a point of order. Again the Honourable Member for St. Philip South is misleading the House. You cannot lay claim to something you do not have. An additional 120 buses if brought on board at the Transport Board may assist their revenue position but it is also going to increase cost. In my opening comments, I made reference to the treatment of transportation as an economic good versus a social good. Of course, there are other things that would go along with the consideration. I have not been able to expose it, I do not plan to expose it.

Sir, there is clear indication that once you stay within a particular concentric circle that you could be competitive within the transport sector. This is why the minibuses do not cry out

as they still make profit. Once you go beyond that, it becomes a social good. Sir, I did say that there should be a targeted amount to subsidise the Transport Board with over the course of how many years, if you accept that transportation is a social good beyond a certain point. Therefore, he should not suggest that I am privatising part of the Transport Board, what I am saying is that there are opportunities for private individuals to get involved in the provision of transportation. The Honourable Member should not try to put me down that line.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, let me conclude that all he is saying is to let the private operators get the opportunity to do what the Transport Board is aiming to do and has been doing previously. The Honourable Member can interpret that however he wants to, but I know there is one simple interpretation that my trained mind allows me to put to that. If the Honourable Member wants the private operators to do what the Transport Board has done previously and is aiming to do again, I can only interpret that in one way, but I will continue.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: On a point of order. Again the Honourable Member for St. Philip South is misleading the House. The only way in which you could now currently privatise the Transport Board is if you sell the existing fleet to private concessionaires. I am not suggesting that. All I am saying is that it has been identified that there can be an additional 120 buses to provide such a service and that rather than burden the Transport Board, given the inefficiencies, the mismanagement and everything that have occurred, that they are now opportunities for private individuals to get involved in the provision of such a service. It does not mean the privatisation of the Transport Board.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of

order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the House the impression that he is satisfied to have the Transport Board operating at 50 per cent of its capacity and he is satisfied to allow the Transport Board to continue to operate at 50 per cent without help from anywhere else.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, just let me say that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, if he wants me to put this interpretation on it, is suggesting that he should not support any movement via a resolution of this type to put the Transport Board in a position to increase the number of serviceable units. Instead, he prefers the private sector to get the opportunity to do what the Transport Board is aiming to do by purchasing...

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South continues to misrepresent what I said. Mr. Chairman, let me add that the same officials, while recognising that there are now 130 or 140 buses available today, identified 180 as perhaps the better place to go in the short term. This is precisely why the subsidy is being provided because the main component of it would go towards repairing an additional 55 buses as the Honourable Member is telling me, and would go towards the target that was identified by the professionals only last week of 180 available buses in a particular day. They went on to say that there would be even better positioned with 250 buses in any given day. I am suggesting therefore, that there are opportunities within the transport service for private individuals in Barbados to become even more involved.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, I will rest my case there. It is the duty and the right of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West to oppose. However, when he is going to oppose in this manner, he might say it might be a fairly hypothetical case he was looking at, but he is suggesting that management of the

Transport Board especially those persons in charge of the repairs and maintenance programme are not going to be sufficiently attentive and sufficiently diligent to ensure that the buses when fixed by UCAL are fixed in a proper manner, so that they will stay away from UCAL for an extended period. Instead, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is saying that because the Transport Board is a State entity and the drivers of the buses do not own them that those drivers or indeed the persons in charge of those drivers are not going to behave in like manner to those who own the buses. He is passing some serious judgement on the integrity and on the competence of the management of the Transport Board, and I am not going to let him get away with that.

Mr. Chairman, one of the things that I, on assuming office for the management of the Transport Board, did was to pay particular attention to the repair and maintenance programme because that is the kernel of the Transport Board(s) operation. If you have an inefficient repair and maintenance programme, the Transport Board is going nowhere.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member may say that he was dealing with it in a hypothetical way but I have to defend the work ethic of the management of the Transport Board especially in this area of repairs and maintenance. Sir, I can tell you that they have responded to me in such a way as to suggest that there is a great degree of attentiveness and thoroughness being paid to the relationship between themselves and UCAL so as to ensure that there is an enhanced repairing and maintenance programme. They have ensured that the workers at UCAL have access to the requisite training by either sending them as part of teams to Brazil, or having them benefit from training which is done and conducted here by officers from the companies in Brazil.

Mr. Chairman, I can also tell you that the checks and balances inherent in the system now of that relationship between the Board and UCAL, is such as to give me a greater level of comfort that what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is speaking about is far from the norm at the Transport Board.

House 81 Sequence 48

7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three minutes more.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, in my remaining time, I am going to speak to why we need to try to get these 55 buses becoming operational. The management of the Transport Board has done its homework in respect of the routes and where the business opportunities lie in respect of ridership.

Mr. Chairman, one of the things this Supplementary is aiming to do, when we get the 55 buses back on the road, would be to regularise the frequencies on some well-established routes. Those who spoke, mentioned some of the inefficiencies in their areas but the Board has done its work and knows where the opportunities best exist. Sir, for example, the City Bypass, the City Circle, Sam Lord(s) Castle and the Indian Ground routes, have been identified as those that require greater treatment.

Mr. Chairman, greater emphasis will also be placed on the north of the island, where what now obtains is a doubling of the routes, which give rise to passengers discomfort. The Board also proposes to place some emphasis on what they call the southern circuit, concentrating in St. George and St. Philip.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, spoke of areas that are far-removed from existing long-established routes, such as Lowlands, Silver Sands and Forde(s) Road. Sir, I can tell you that the Board is very conscious of the need to get services back into these areas but because of the low bus availability at present, we are unable to provide service to those routes in a highly desirable manner.

We are, therefore, saying that as long as we can get serviceable units count up, we will, first and foremost, be able to go back into those area with increasing frequency. We will even put services back into area where, based on the research that has been conducted, we know they would be good from a revenue intake viewpoint for the Transport Board. Mr. Chairman, the Board is also very conscious of the need to improve its provisions to the schools.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to this very important Supplementary. I believe that this Supplementary comes at a time when the Transport Board is in need of further support on the routes which it has been providing. I am glad that the Honourable Member made the point that emphasis will be placed on the northern routes and that he will be redoubling his efforts, to make sure that the long-haul passengers will be provided with better service.

The Honourable Member also mentioned the fact that the Board proposes to place emphasis on the southern circuit, concentrating in St. George and St. Philip. I am glad to hear that concentration would be placed in the area of St. George because recently we have had a number of complaints from persons in the Redland/Ashbury areas, who complained that they cannot get buses at certain times of the

day.

Mr. Chairman, the people of Lower Applewaite are also complaining. I noticed that a bus service had started there but had to be discontinued because of the problem that now exists, in terms of the road widening.

Mr. Chairman, I want specifically to speak to the question of maintenance cost at the Transport Board. Sir, from this Supplementary, it is recognised that we will be spending more than \$4 million on maintenance. In fact, I must say this seems to be the problem in Government, even in my Ministry, where we had to undergo tremendous repairs to vehicles. Another problem is that, over the course of the last five years, much money has been spent on the purchase of new vehicles but very often, we have to spend more money on repairs to those same vehicles.

Mr. Chairman, in recognition of that, the time has come for us to look at a central workshop, where some of these vehicles can be repaired in a more modern and efficient manner, as I believe there is the need for higher technology to be used in repairing these vehicles. Sir, I believe that part of the problem has to do with the selection of buses. Some people prefer the Leyland buses, instead of the Mercedes but I think more emphasis has to be placed on selection.

Mr. Chairman, in our society we have more than

110 000 vehicles on our roads and it is expected that over the next five years there would be a 4 per cent increase in vehicular traffic, which would grow to be approximately 120 000 or 130 000 vehicles on our roads.

Mr. Chairman, out of a survey done by the Ministry of Public Works within the last two years, 65 per cent of the travelling public prefer

to travel on public transportation. However, most of the respondents felt that because of the poor service being offered within the public service, they must and have to buy their own vehicles. That is why one finds the transportation industry today as being one of the most lucrative industries in Barbados. There are a number of persons wanting to get into public transportation, either by way of taxis, ZRS or ZMs, and as one Honourable Member said, even though there are many on our roads, they are still making money.

Mr. Chairman, we need to look at how we can provide a mass transportation system for those persons who want to move about the island. Sir, in some developed societies, there are buses, trains and other transport systems, which provide for the movement of people around the city and around the suburbs.

Mr. Chairman, in Barbados we have the ABC Highway. It is believed that if there can be a system - which, of course, cannot be done at this time as we would have to improve the highways - of mass transport, moving across from Warrens or the Harbour, across to Bussa Roundabout, into to Christ Church, we believe this could work in moving people across the country.

Mr. Chairman, the point is, do we still encourage persons travelling from St. George, St. Philip, or from the outskirts of Barbados, into Bridgetown? Sir, as I have said, all routes lead into Bridgetown, so that the road system from Highway 1 to Highway 7 starts at Trafalgar Square and touches across Barbados. There is also a situation where all buses come into Bridgetown. Mr. Chairman, I believe a system could be worked out, where there are by-pass buses. This was a good system introduced a number of years ago, where the by-pass buses would moved from Oistins to Speightstown, via cross country. I think we need to improve that operation where buses can

now move freely via cross country, where persons would not necessarily have to go into Bridgetown in order to make their way to Christ Church or to the outskirts of Barbados.

H:No81(49)710 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

I believe that in the near future you should be looking at how we should rationalise the routes of the Transport Board and the private concessionaires. This brings into focus the whole idea of the Transport Authority. Sir, within the next year, when the Bill is brought to this House for the Transport Authority, it will help to rationalise the Transport Board, ZRs and other minibuses. There is a need to do it at this time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we found that persons prefer to travel with the Transport Board because they offer a more reliable service than minibuses. Sir, minibuses will travel to certain communities but they do not travel beyond certain times to places like Gazettes, the Pine and Deacons Road and people complain that ZRs and minibuses do not run after 7:00 p.m. This means that Government must provide the service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Transport Board would make a profit if it did not have to run beyond a certain time. For example, after midday the Transport Board bus will run to St. George or St. Philip with only three or four passengers but the minibuses and ZRs do not provide this service because they only run at peak hours. Sir, the buses of the Transport Board provide services every hour and sometimes more than twice an hour for every area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Transport Board is looking at improving their operational system to provide a better service. Sir, the time has

come when the Transport Board should be fully computerised in order to know when buses will arrive and when those buses will leave the bus stand. Many people complain that the buses are scheduled to leave at a particular time but that they leave at any hour. Sir, I think this is unfair because, at this time in our development, the bus service must improve in their daily schedules.

Mr. Chairman, the new management of the Transport Board has gone a step further and provided monitoring systems and I wish them well. Sir, when the 55 new buses arrive, I want to make a call for the old buses to be repaired so that the school bus system can be improved. We have found that traffic moves freely when children are on holiday so there is a relationship between school system and the transportation system and we must look at this. A central school bus system will help to improve efficiency in the transport sector along with the park-and-ride system.

Mr. Chairman, we usually have regular discussion on traffic management and I hope that the 55 new buses would help us introduce the park-and-ride system so that people could park their cars and ride on the buses which belong Government. Sir, 65 per cent of the people said they would travel on buses only if the system is efficient.

Mr. Chairman, I also hope that the Transport Board could also provide some air-conditioned buses because people have said in the questionnaire sent out that they would not give up the luxury of their cars to ride on buses which are hot. Sir, these things must be borne in mind and as traffic increases in Barbados, we have to do more to encourage people to travel on buses owned by Government especially at peak hours.

Mr. Chairman, new measure will come to Parliament next year on what we propose to do,

the strategy that would be used to help the people of Barbados to move better and quicker and to curb the number of vehicles coming into Bridgetown at this time.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that this is important for the Transport Board. I hope the funds in this Supplementary would be used to the benefit of the travelling public and to modernise their equipment.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Philip West.

Dr.D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, given the late hour, I have only a few things to say and, basically, I do not have time to waste this evening.

Sir, I personally believe that after 11 years and the number of Ministers who have been responsible for the Transport Board that all of them have failed miserably with respect to delivering service to Barbados. Mr. Chairman, I have come to that opinion unreservedly because I have to listen to the people of Barbados. There is not a lot of confidence with respect to the public of Barbados about the Transport Board, its capacity to deliver a timely and reliable service to them.

Mr. Chairman, that is the honest truth. It has not got any better within the last ten or eleven years. It is surprising to me that the present Minister responsible is living in never-never land. I do not believe he has any clue how to solve the problems at the Transport Board. I heard a Minister responsible for the Transport Board speak to a position where 55 buses after being repaired....that would be required for some average daily efficiency. I want to say to the Minister that it is a matter of poor management. Sir, I say this because the Transport Board is a bottomless pit for the

money of taxpayers and is getting worse every single year.

Mr. Chairman, there can be no logical explanation for the continued deterioration in the service at the Transport Board when they have losses every year and the losses are increasing. Therefore, I want the Minister to concentrate on developing new policy positions and introducing new management strategies that are going to effectively deal with this problem. It is not going to be repairing 50 buses because that does not make any sense whatsoever.

H81/19:20

Sequence 50

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

Continuation Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Sir, I think, that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South first has to look at the concepts of reurbanisation in Barbados. It is not now that the type of distribution of the Barbadian population where Barbadians all (head) to town where the majority of houses were located in the wider urban environs. What we now have are many new developments in Barbados which are further away from town, which require a completely new route distributions and time frames with respect to how the buses have to travel. It requires a completely new introduction of understanding the type of policies to solve the problem. That is one of the major problems that exist.

Mr. Chairman, the only other remark that I wish to make is this.

Asides

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: I would revisit the fact that I do not believe that the Transport Board

should be allowed to continue to be subsidised by taxpayers money so frequently, when no minister can demonstrate to the public of Barbados how the spending and haemorrhage of taxpayers monies will be controlled. As a result, I have to critically give my support to the Supplementary, because I understand what the Transport Board is trying to accomplish with respect to those poor people who do not own a vehicle, disabled persons, as well as the elderly who need transport in Barbados. That is a service I have to respect. However, on the other hand, I feel that there must be a transformation with respect to its fair services. Consideration must be given to the development and distribution of routes in relation to where people are living.

Sir, I want to address two parochial issues, which relate to transport into Breezy Hill, a development that would have had stages one, two and three, with approximately 180 houses but suffers from an ineffective bus service.

Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East alluded to a problem that exists with respect to people living in the Coverley area, but I want to speak to specifically to those who live up the hill from Fair View main road, or Lead Vale. The bus comes up Lead Vale, turns and goes to Fair View. It could easily go up the hill into Coverley, service that area and return. Sir, because of the time constraint, I would essentially not discuss any more parochial issues.

However, I want to say to my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, that I am not here for any fancy talking. You have a job to do, so do the job. The ministers have not done the job, because the Transport Board is worse than it was five years ago. The evidence of that, is the continuing haemorrhage with respect to its losses on a daily basis. If you think that I do not know what I am saying, I refer to the Transport Board(s Annual Report at

page 22. It says that in 1992, there were losses of \$13 million; 2000-2001, \$20 million; 2002-2004, \$24 million. This cannot be acceptable.

Sir, I am saying that the responsibility lies with the Minister and his Board to develop the policies that will solve this problem. That is all I am saying. You must develop policies to solve the problem. That is your job. That is what you were put there to do. I would want all the Honourable Members on the other side to put their collective heads together and solve the problem.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. James south.

Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I wish to support the Resolution before the Honourable House and to take issue with the observations made by the Honourable Member who just sat and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Sir, my initial point of departure from their comments is on the matter of whether the performance of the Transport Board has been worse over the last few years. I want to fundamentally disagree with them.

Mr. Chairman, the challenge faced by the Transport Board is a challenge we are facing at a national level as a developing country, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West spoke to it. The transport service is a social good but it has an economic value. When we describe the delivery of social services as a social good, the question of its economic value arises. Sir, to what extent can we as a developing country, can continue to carry the full range of free or subsidised services?

Sir, the Transport Board is caught in a

situation where bus fares have remained relatively stable, but there has been rapid urbanisation where areas of Barbados, previously regarded as rural Barbados which have become highly residential, demanding services to these parts of the country.

We have a mobile population with a greater number of people going out to work. The reduction of unemployment and the number of people now in the labour force, place a greater strain on the transport system on a daily basis. There are increased numbers of persons attending the Samuel Jackman Polytechnic, Barbados Community College and the university, demanding increased service at those locations. Sir, these come against a background of rising prices in the international and national economy, thus all of the inputs of providing the service have grown, increased, but bus fares have been held at a minimum. Furthermore, there is a more mobile social and working community for whom service must be provided. So the challenges faced by the Transport Board to increase the number of buses, routes and passengers, against a background of low revenues, present a problem for the Transport Board.

However, I agree that some efficiencies in relation to management and operations must be established and attained, but these will not be easy for any service that is so heavily subsidised, in a culture where there is a view that once it is a Government service, it must be free or heavily subsidised and that levels of wastage which does not exist in the private sector, are very much a part of the operational culture of government institutions.

Sir, I also agree that these issues must be addressed, but these are the challenges with which the Transport Board is confronted but they are not challenges which identify the Board as a failure. Sir, I think they have to be complimented for their efforts continue to

provide a service in this very challenging environment.

Sir, in view of the time remaining, I want to speak on a parochial matter. Sir, I would wish to thank the Transport Board for the circular service through Wanstead and Warrens making critical stops throughout the constituency of St. James South.

H 81: 19.30 p.m.

Sequence 51

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

House 81, sequence 52, 7:30 p.m.

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

I have written to them repeatedly over many years, pointing to the necessity for services through areas like West Terrace, which have large numbers of women and young girls and who had to walk long distances from where the bus stops were originally before this service was introduced.

I would wish however to draw to the attention of the Transport Board that there is yet another critical link service which must take place, not only the constituency of St. James South but the entire parish of St. James.

There is no proper link between Highway 2A and the main coast road, Highway 1. Every day you can see scores of people attempting to walk from Highway 2A down the St. James main road, Highway 1, attempting to get another service to take them either north or south or to go to work at the hotels and other establishments on the West Coast. This is a critical link service that needs to be provided because there are large numbers of people who walk, from school children to adults, to make that east/west connection for which there is

not...

Asides.

Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is making the point that walking the uphill, particularly at the end of a long working day or at the end of a work period, which may not be a traditional day, is particularly gruelling. I believe that this is a critical service that needs to be provided.

Equally, in terms of the location for such a service, the service could come either up Holders Hill, which should be the preferable or another linkage is at the Vauxhall Road. The route that would seem to me to make the greatest possible sense would be the Holders Hill route because you would not only capture the east/west and west/east movement but you would then be able to do critical linkages for the constituency of St. Michael North East, from which people have to come to also get to work and to other locations on the coast.

In addition to this particular route request there is also a very poor service operated by the Transport Board on Sundays, which comes across the Cave Hill route and into the constituency of St. James South and then moves back into the constituency of St. Michael North East. This is the Holders Green service. This is one of the services that has been partly abandoned by the Transport Board and given up to the private sector.

Sir, many of the private sector operatives are not working on Sundays when people are attempting to go to church and get to work. There is therefore a pressing need for a regular Transport Board service on this route on Sundays and to have a circular service, moving up and down Holders Hill and through part of that Holders Green route across Cave Hill back on to link up with Highway 2A, and continuous

movement in that direction onto the coast and around those critical areas where large numbers of people live.

Prior to the last boundary change, the St. James South constituency was the largest in Barbados along with St. Michael North East and yet it was not being adequately service in terms of the demographic distribution of the constituency, relative to where people needed to go and to be placed. The Transport Board therefore needs to look at the routes which it has abandoned and given over to the private sector to determine whether or not specialised services or linked services, not operated by the private sector, can be revenue yielding routes for them.

Sir, they have put a circular St. Michael and Bridgetown route in that seems to me to do very well. You can see numbers of people waiting at the bus stops and the buses always relatively full moving through the City, the City Circle. I think a similar bus could be placed on the St. James routes at critical parts to help to service those persons who have to get to the hotels and other jobs on the west coast.

I also think that the Transport Board needs to revisit the extent to which it has allowed private sector interest to dominate the Wanstead Route. There are persons on that route who would be very glad for a more regular Transport Board service rather than only to have a frequency of service from ZRs and the private sector operators. The whole issue of routing is one of the considerations that the Transport Board needs to reexamine in determining what sort of revenue streams it will generate, as it strides to earn more money, if it is not going to be increasing fares.

Other members today have spoken to the issue of how routes in their particular constituencies need to have services but there is need to move away from a lot of the traditional

routes and try to find those niche areas that the private sector is not now operating.

I believe you indicated to me that I am on the verge of yielding my time. I did indicate that I would try to give as much time as possible to the Minister but I did want to make the larger point of differing from the Honourable Members on the other side and really to attempt to make the case for the constituency service that I hope to see implemented.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, as the representative for St. Michael North, I cannot share the view that there has been no improvement to the Transport Board service over the last 11 years. Speaking as the representative for St. Michael North, I can say that I am certainly pleased that over those 11 years, I was able to

see introduced into the constituency bus service at least in three areas, Husbands New Development also called Oklahoma, Grazettes and Eden Lodge.

Mr. Chairman, at one stage, a service was also being provided for Cave Hill, which has been discontinued. Sir, I share the view of the Honourable Member for St. James South that certainly given the population of the Cave Hill area, we should be able to have a bus dedicated to service the Cave Hill area. I am not talking mainly of just the drive through as we get now from the Holders Green bus but I mean a bus going into Well Gap and Lodge Hill and really servicing the needs of the many persons who live in those areas.

As it stands now, we have to depend on the same Holders Green bus or unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, the whims and fancies of the mini buses and ZR operators who remain largely in

my view, uncontrolled in this country. I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the time has come when we need to look at not only the issue of route assignments to these minibuses and ZR operators but we need also to have the issue of hours of service addressed as well the licences and permits allocated to the ZR and minibuses operators.

We have, Mr. Chairman, to ensure that we look at the issue of the hours of service, not just route assignments for in the licences and permits allocated to the minibus and ZR operators. Too often, we are left at the whims and fancies of the operators.

House 81, sequence 52, 19:4014

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

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

Someone could refute what I just said by saying that a minibus goes up in Well Gap. That is partially true because when the ZR and minibus operators are shutting down when it gets dark or in non prime time, commuters are left stranded and totally helpless. We need to ensure that minibus and ZR operators have to operate for certain periods of time. In fact, I feel that it should be the same time as the Transport buses have to operate.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy talks about subsidising. Mr. Chairman, I am glad he made that point because I want to say now that it is a myth to talk about the Transport Board having any advantage on the ZR or minibus operators because of any subsidy because we have witnessed as a fact over the years ZR operators and minibus operators deciding that they are going to stop anywhere on the roads and they deliberately flout the terms of their permits and go into all sorts of areas giving people (special drops(. Mr. Chairman, the fact that they operate uncontrolled and go into any

areas they feel like and giving special drops and stopping anywhere at anytime generates more revenue for them than any subsidy given to the Transport Board. So there is no advantage to the Transport Board by the particular subsidy that is involved.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that if we were to look at those issues we would find that a lot of the problems we currently have could in fact be solved or certainly they would be less of an impact financially on the Transport Board or certainly they would be less of an impact on the commuters who are the ones who are suffering primarily by the service being provided at this stage in our country.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, I will not stretch your generosity at all or interfere with it. Speaking purely as a Member of Parliament, I would like to see an improvement in the service offered on the St. Albans route, the Rock Hall\Speightstown route and the Rock Dundo route and I would like to also see a radical improvement in what the people of Greenwich Village and Seaview get.

Sir, I must speak now as an Honourable Member of Parliament and say that I am very concerned that there are buses which are not working, many of which only require one part to get them working. I am also concerned over the system of routing.

Mr. Chairman, I agree with the Honourable Member for St. George North who said that we should have better route rationalisation. I believe that the time has come where the Transport Board assesses the capacity of given routes and the response to them. For example, in the north there are times when buses go at certain times totally empty and at another time many people are at a bus stop and cannot get a bus.

Mr. Chairman, as the Transport Board celebrates 50 years, it should reflect on where it has come. I am aware it was set up by statute 50 years ago. It has attracted a core of highly professional people. The worst thing that can happen to a professional person who is determined to work, is to be frustrated either by old-fashioned systems of governance or to be frustrated when the proposals they put for improvement are rejected.

Sir, the last thing I would say is that we on this side should have listened to all of the debate and should be very careful not to reject out of hand, what was coming from the other side.

Thank you very much.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, in winding up the debate let me thank Honourable Members on both sides of the House for the contributions they have made to this debate.

Some Honourable Members have taken one philosophical position, others have taken another, but I think at the end of the day all Honourable Members of this Chamber do have the interest of the travelling public at heart. How we are able to achieve the results that all of us long for is another matter.

Mr. Chairman, I have listened quite carefully to all Honourable Members as they made their contributions and it is clear to all of us that deficiencies exist in respect of the servicing of particular areas in the constituencies. Mr. Chairman, I have also listened carefully to the need for us to carefully reexamine the rationalisation of the routes and I can inform this Honourable House that the Transport Board did engage in a comprehensive route rationalisation exercise in July of 2002 and thereafter the Board has been revising its routes. Sir, there are some demographic shifts

in Barbados and there are many other factors which would influence the need for us to continue to revisit the allocation.

Mr. Chairman, having said all of that, the only way that the Transport Board could be in a position to deliver the type of service that all of us in this Honourable Chamber and the many persons out there who depend on the service would like, is if it operates with a higher level of efficiency and effectiveness and if it gets the numbers right. At the end of the day if we do not have the requisite number of serviceable units each and every day, notwithstanding how careful you are able to do your scheduling or how careful and meticulous your route rationalisation is, you would not be able to deliver in accordance with your desires, which should coincide with the wishes of the commuting public and you would not be able to deliver in that manner unless you have the requisite number of units.

Mr. Chairman, a lot has been said and a lot has been made about the need for us to get back into active service the 55 buses which were spoken about. That will significantly improve the situation relative to what exist at the moment. That will take us with a number of serviceable units in any one day, all things being equal, from the average 140 closer to the 190 or so.

Mr. Chairman, I want to inform this Honourable House that the peak vehicle requirement as was determined in 2001-2002, was 186 buses. However, in light of developments that had taken place in this country, in light of the demands which have been placed on the public transportation system, some of which have been occasioned by the high level of employment, and as a result of the demographic shifts, have resulted in a revision to the peak vehicle requirement from 186 in the 2001-2002 period to somewhere closer to 250.

Mr. Chairman, I said that to say that while we recognise that there really is an expressed need to move the number of serviceable units up from 140 on average closer to 190 or 200, there is still a need for us to maintain an indeed increase our level of efficiency and there will be need for us to modernise the systems within which the operation at the Transport Board functions so as to ensure that once we get the number up that we can keep those numbers at a more adequate level.

House 81 Sequence 53

7:50 p.m.

Tuesday, November 08, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Chairman, consistent with what I have just said, that the optimum point for the efficient functioning of the Transport Board should have it with a vehicle requirement closer to 250 buses, would be the need for us to access more units.

Mr. Chairman, there is a move afoot for us to be able to acquire units, which will take us over and beyond the 190 peak vehicle requirement that will be allowed, when these buses can be repaired. Therefore, based on what I have heard in here today, it stands to reasons that this Honourable House, probably minus the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, will support any move for us to get to the best position at the Transport Board, to allow it to service the travelling public, in a manner that we all desire.

Mr. Chairman, I close by thanking all Honourable Members who have made a contribution during this debate. The senior management of the Board would have been listening carefully and would have been taking copious notes but I want you all to bear with us

because we will only be able to give all of you what you desire, if we get the number of units up to the required level.

Mr. Chairman, with those few remarks, I now beg to move that Head 46 stand part.

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

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

On the motion of the Hon. A. P. WOOD, seconded by the Hon. R. R. FARLEY, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee of Supply, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of the Hon. A. P. WOOD, seconded by the Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the Resolution was read a first and second time and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, this concludes Government Business for today(s Sitting. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, November 15, at 1000 a.m.

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

The question was put to and resolved in the affirmative without division and MR. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

H:No81(54)756 p.m.