

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2003 – 2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, August 11, 2006.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.20 a.m. on Friday, August 11, 2006.

PRESENT

His Honour J. M. Edghill, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)
Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)
Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon.)
Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, D.A., B.C.H. (Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)
Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), LL.M. (Leic.), J.P. (Minister of Labour and Social Security)
Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Public Works and Transport)
Mr. R. D. MARSHALL (Chairman of Committees)
Hon. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)
Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands)
Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P. (Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)
Hon. J. X. WALCOTT, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S. (Edin.), J.P. (Minister of Health)
Mr. R. D. JONES, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Ed.), J.P.
Mr. H. F. LASHLEY
Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)
Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN
Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Energy and the Environment)
Hon. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A. (Minister of Social Transformation)
Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc., J.P. (Minister of State, Prime Minister’s Office)

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S.
Mr. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.)
Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)
Dr. W. F. DUGUID, B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S., FDRCS, J.P.
Mr. R. L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A.

Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, August 8, 2006.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minutes have been circulated to all Honourable Members and, subject to any observations from them, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, August 8, 2006, stand confirm.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

PAPERS

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I am commanded to lay the following:

- 1. Fifth Report of the Electoral and Boundaries Commission.

2. The Draft Electoral and Boundaries (Review of Boundaries) Order, 2006.
3. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (William Gooding) Order, 2006.
4. Value Added Tax (Refund) (Covenant Life Teaching Centre) Order, 2006.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following:

1. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Amendment) Bill, 2006.
2. Resolution to approve the Draft Electoral and Boundaries Commission (Review of Boundaries) Order, 2006.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to move that the following Bill be read a first time.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Amendment) Bill, 2006.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Government Business is now the order of the day.

ORDER NO. 10 – BILL ENTITLED AN ACT TO AMEND THE ROAD TRAFFIC ACT

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this matter had commenced in the House of Assembly in a previous Sitting. We are proposing, on This Side, to defer

consideration of this matter to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament. In accordance with the Rules that Select Committee will comprise of six members from this Chamber and five members from the Other Place in relation to the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2006. I further propose that Members representing This Side on that Select Committee are:

The Honourable Member for St. George North.

The Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

I beg to move that the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2006 be deferred to a Joint Select Committee.

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

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

ORDER NO. 14 – LIAT (1974) LIMITED GUARANTEE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2006

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, if it pleases the House there are two issues standing for LIAT this morning, one is the second reading of the LIAT (1974) Guarantee (Amendment) Bill, 2006 and the Resolution to approve the guarantee of the Government in favour of Bombardier Services Corporation of the performance of LIAT of aircraft maintenance, return conditions and obligations and repossession containing the terms and conditions set out in the Schedule to the Resolution and I propose to do both today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a background to this particular Bill, this year in February 2006, we debated the LIAT (1974) Guarantee Bill and on April 27, 2006, the Governor-General assented to the LIAT (1974) Guarantee Act and it was gazetted on that same day, April 27, 2006. The purpose of the Act was to make provision for a guarantee by the Government of Barbados with respect to aircraft maintenance, return conditions and obligations and repossession under the Aircraft Lease Agreement between LIAT (1974) Limited and Bombardier Services Corporation of Canada. Sir, LIAT provides in section 3.1 that the Government of Barbados, being a shareholder in LIAT, and pursuant to the Aircraft Lease Agreement, listed in Part 1

Schedule, shall by Resolution of both Houses guarantee the performance by the company of the aircraft maintenance, return conditions and obligations.
10.30 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be stated that at the time of the passing of the Act, attached to that Act, in terms of the regulations, was a guarantee which contained only summary provisions of the guarantee. Subsequent to that, we have been in constant negotiations with LIAT and Bombardier. We are now settled on a full text of the terms and conditions under that guarantee. That is why we are seeking to amend this Act.

Sir, we want to set out in full the obligation of the Barbados Government under that guarantee in respect of maintenance guarantee that all of the terms and conditions under the guarantee are met, and that Barbados is in a position to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that we set out as well, since Barbados has taken a major shareholding in LIAT, how LIAT is performing, the terms and conditions and the basis for us to guarantee LIAT.

Sir, it is not a secret that LIAT is in a restructuring mode, and it has been so for some time. In August 2005, the Government of Barbados assumed the majority shareholding in the carrier. The company leases two Dash-8 311 aircraft from Bombardier Services Corporation of Canada for which certain assurances are needed from the owners.

Prior to September 11, 2001 – this was set out when we originally debated LIAT – aircraft maintenance guarantees simply required that a financial provision was made in an airline's accounts and no immediate financial payments are actually made to a lessor, for aircraft. However, since that date, and given the financial state of the global airline industry, it is now required from lessors, not only that you make a provision within your accounts when you are leasing a plane, but that you actually pay monies into an escrow account. This is to ensure that in case an aircraft is returned to the lessor, that aircraft remains in pristine condition to be utilised almost immediately upon its return. If it is not done, then the lessor takes it upon his or herself, to effect the repairs that are necessary to return that plane to pristine condition.

Sir, regarding the Dash-8s are some of the most efficient aircraft are for short-haul travel, therefore, these aircraft are very much in demand. As I said before, LIAT has leased two such aircraft. The requirement from Bombardier is that LIAT pay approximately US\$50 000 per month per plane, or approximately US\$1.2 million a year into this escrow account, so that Bombardier could be assured that if

the planes are returned or if they have to take them back from LIAT, they can put them back into the condition that is needed.

Sir, however, Bombardier advised that relief of these payments could be put in place for LIAT, provided the Governments of Barbados and Antigua were willing to enter into the appropriate guarantees.

Sir, the Ministry of International Transport, through the Solicitor General's Office, were advised that the guarantees could only be provided on enactment of the relevant legislation. Sir, draft guarantees were divided into two parts, the recitals and three Schedules. The recitals noted that LIAT has an agreement with Bombardier and a percentage shareholding of each Government. By the efforts of the lessor to enforce the provisions of leases, subsequent negotiations and agreements were reached, and as a result this restructuring document was done.

As a condition to Bombardier entering this agreement, the Government of Barbados has agreed to do two things, to guarantee the maintenance and return condition obligations of LIAT under the lease, and to guarantee the prompt deregistration and return of an aircraft.

Sir, agreement on the text of the guarantee was being processed, debated and consulted, and the final refinement was to be undertaken by the Solicitor General's office in Barbados, in consultation with our Ministry of Finance, Minister of International Transport and Bombardier. A final agreement of the text was received on July 31, 2006. All provisions relating to the role of State of registry have been removed from the guarantee as Antigua and Barbuda, and release as the State of registry for LIAT.

On August 3, 2006, the Chief Parliamentary Council advised that section IV (a) of the guarantee of the Act, limited terms and conditions of the guarantee set out in Part 11 of the Act. Many of the fundamental terms which must be contained in the guarantee, and which are in the proposed Resolution, would be preempted by the Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in essence, we are seeking an amendment and are deleting Section IV of the Act, taking out the provisions of the Resolution, under the terms and conditions of the guarantee, which were initially only summary terms and conditions, and replacing them with the full text of the guarantee, which is important for Barbados.

It is therefore necessary to amend the Act to remove the constraints, which are in Section IV that we are deleting, and the other part of the Bill, Part II of the Schedule, which is now being replaced with the full text of the guarantee.

Sir, it is important for us not only to guarantee, but to continue in this vein, particularly as it relates to LIAT. I do not think that anyone in this Honourable House would dispute the importance of regional airline travel to the continued existence of our economy. Moreso, I think that we are all in agreement with the concept, that LIAT (1974) Limited has a fundamental role to play, in the development of our tourism industry, but moreso in a wider Caribbean Single Market context, LIAT becomes more critical and important to our existence and the existence of some of our neighbours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Return Maintenance Guarantee, which we, along with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, are guaranteeing, does a number of things in relation to LIAT. It reduces the accrued maintenance reserve, which is currently in excess of US\$7 million, on LIAT's balance sheet. It also allows LIAT to stop paying US\$50 million into that escrow account, which is a burden on a carrier which is already struggling. It then enables LIAT to participate in the purchase of parts from Bombardier Services Corporation, at a discounted rate when compared to other airlines across the globe.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as part of the restructuring of LIAT – and I speak in terms of LIAT and its future – I think that is necessary in this Honourable House that we outline how our investment in LIAT is being served and where it is going in the future, to ensure that we get viable and consistent performance, from a carrier that is vital to our existence.

Sir, in May 2006, LIAT hired the new Executive Officer, Mr. Mark Darby, who has over thirty years experience in the airline industry. Mr. Darby is a British citizen, who started his career as an aircraft engineer. He has worked with some of the major carriers in the world. He has been a consultant to Singapore Airlines, and Lufthansa Airlines. He has been at the centre of actually setting up some low cost carriers across the globe, such as Air Arabia, Air Juazeiro and Kuwait. He was the man who was referred to, in many of these circumstances as an airline doctor, and this is the type of person that has been brought now to the head management of LIAT.

10.40 a.m.

Sir, in addition, in the last quarter of the year, LIAT has been performing reasonably well, given the state of affairs of the airline industry and the entire airline environment, in which we are supposed to operate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, up to the end of May, LIAT is now ahead, in terms of passengers carried by about ten thousand, compared to the same period last year. The percentage loads of LIAT have fallen just about 1 per cent. The average fares for LIAT, because of the excess capacity

that we have to compete against in the market are down, just about \$10 but we are operating in an environment which has seen record fuel price increases.

Specific to LIAT there were many unplanned engine overhauls, which accounted for approximately US\$600 000 per engine, for the two engines that were being repaired. There was the payment of long overdue pay increases for the staff of LIAT, except for the pilots. Last month there has been an interim pilot settlement, which has now been agreed upon.

The total volume of passengers, as I said, is higher than last year, but the average fares are lower, due to increased competition in the marketplace, particularly from Caribbean Star and Caribbean Sun.

The new online Naviteir System that LIAT was setting up, had some technical problems, initially. It took longer time than expected, but those problems are now behind us. A lot of what happened, when we sought to convert LIAT from the normal traditional legacy type model to a low-cost model, really created serious effects on our ability to interline. These are passengers coming off aircraft mostly out of Great Britain, Virgin, BA, and BWIA. Now that the Naviteir system is up and running, this will more than help us with our financial performance and help with the performance of LIAT going into the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last few months have focussed a lot on revenue management, utilising the new computer-based tools that are available to LIAT for the first time. We believe that this would substantially help us through, what is traditionally the very difficult period of September, October and November, before the Winter Season begins.

Sir, by September 7, we are going to have a new revised operating schedule for LIAT. The new Operating Schedule is going to substantially reduce our operating cost, raise the capacity and improve the punctuality of LIAT, substantially. This thing about, 'leave island any time' and other definitions that were attached to the acronym LIAT, will now be things of the past. The change of this business operation from an operational base to marketing-led base, for the first time, is very important for LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, part of the issues all along is that what was substantially lacking, in terms of LIAT's makeup was the whole issue of its marketing base. LIAT did not have a marketing section.

Sir, in terms of its financial performance, LIAT has committed to going to the markets to borrow a substantial amount of money to continue in its restructuring plan, in the second phase.

There is a \$5.5 million bridging finance loan that was necessary. Sir, out of that \$5.5 million loan, which came from the Government of Barbados, US\$1 million were paid for the overhaul of the two engines that I spoke about previously. There were two new air-conditioning units that were purchased for US\$250 000 each, which would assist substantially, we believe, in terms of its punctuality, customers' satisfaction and comfort.

We are redrafting the Budget of LIAT. There are going to be revised cash flows to the end of 2006, then, going ahead, there is a 100-day "Get-well" plan for LIAT. Mr. Deputy Speaker, LIAT is expected, at the end of this year, on a base of about US\$200 million to have an overall projected loss of about US\$20 million, even if there is an operating profit.

We believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in one year, we could see a substantial turn around in that performance, with moving from EC\$20 million loss to EC\$20 million gain, at that end of that year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these changes should vastly improve the punctuality and reliability of LIAT. There should be higher levels of customer service and increased revenue yields, through this new sales and marketing effort. Sir, the team based in Barbados, should be able to substantially do this:

1. Reduce operating costs.
2. Improve processes and procedures.
3. An adequate business and control and measurement systems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of these planned actions are slated to take place by the end of October of this year, but, clearly, the full benefits would take longer to be realised, Sir, by the end of September this year, there would be major schedule reviews, reflecting a more commercial base than has ever been seen for LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the past, one of the things that LIAT has always done is seek to be our brother's keeper, helping those in the Eastern Caribbean, who really do not have the financial resources to pay into the carrier.

Sir, even though we are guarding this issue of looking after our neighbours in the Caribbean, the new schedule from LIAT, should reflect a more commercial approach to how we deal with scheduling of aircraft, throughout the Caribbean. Barbados should see increased gains in this department from

this new network, when it is set in place by the end of September.

Sir, the Marketing Department should also be in place by then, and what we should be seeing is new creative promotions, geared towards seeking to help people to better use the Naviteir online system that LIAT has created, driving more online business into LIAT.

We believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we can see, as I said, a break-even by the middle of next year, 2007. As I said, by the end of the year, I think we should be seeing a complete reversal in the financial fortunes of LIAT going forward.

The future could include, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well, smaller jet aircraft for longer routes in the Caribbean, but only if it makes sense commercially. There is a probability that LIAT can introduce, particularly for longer haul routes in the Caribbean, a smaller jet service. There are people like American Eagle, who already fly small commercial jets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me also say, it is important that LIAT will engage in a major debt raising exercise, which should be completed by November 2006. At that time, this bridging loan of US\$5 million by the Barbados Government should be repaid.

Once LIAT is able to stabilise what it is doing and go to the markets and raise the level of capital that we expect it could raise, what you would see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that our \$5.5 million bridging loan by the Barbados Government will be repaid.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, part and parcel of what is important in this, is that LIAT becomes fundamentally more important to Barbados, in the context of a new single market and economy, when that is achieved.

10.50 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we initially invested in LIAT, we dealt with the concept of us putting our movement eggs in an airline that is not Caribbean-owned. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe that it is important that we have a carrier which is our own that will continue to fly even in the face of difficult circumstances. We believe that if the interests in these carriers are not from this region that what we could easily end up with is a situation of carriers pulling out particularly in a very difficult situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when Caribbean Star came on stream, LIAT was the carrier that was headed to do substantially well. The increase capacity that was created in this environment when Caribbean Star and Caribbean Sun came in has clearly been a difficulty for LIAT and a difficulty.

that all of us have to live with regarding where we go with the whole multilateral air services agreement within CARICOM.

Sir, whether or not we open up the floodgate and allow everybody in, is something that we need to discuss more seriously, but not at this time. Sir, are we best served if we open up the airspace totally and have every type of airline coming in without any restriction particularly in a small market? Mr. Deputy Speaker, do those territories that are now paying big dollars to large international commercial airlines have an obligation as well to help with the resources of LIAT rather than being beneficiaries of LIAT? Sir, are they to pay money to Virgin Atlantic, American Airlines, British Airways and the like and not pay some type of payment to LIAT which is serving them?

Sir, the other issue that makes LIAT substantially more important is the level of passengers that actually came through the Grantley Adams International Airport last year. Sir, last year we had 1.8 million passengers transiting the Grantley Adams International Airport. If we are going to rebuild a new airport and create a hub for the Caribbean, it is necessary that airlines like LIAT, which bring substantial loads to Barbados, continue to be helped through this process. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the jury may still be out on the concept of whether or not an open sky agreement that allows every international carrier to come into our airspace is really the best thing for us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people would talk about the market controlling itself, but once there is a difficulty, we may face all of these airlines exiting. Therefore, it is important for Barbados, particularly as a hub for the rest of the Eastern Caribbean and the perfect bridgehead even to the south, to encourage entities like LIAT to continue to exist.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Administration believes that we do need to have investment in this carrier. This Administration fundamentally believes that having an interest in this airline at this time advances our cause relative to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and to the concept of an airline expanding not only into the Eastern Caribbean but probably looking north and then looking south into South America.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other developments on the horizon for LIAT, which I think are important, however, these things cannot be said at this time. Sir, we believe that LIAT is moving in the right direction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this is the type of initiative that could bear well for the future of Barbados and for its people. Sir, therefore with those words, I asked that this Resolution be read a second time.

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

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the matter before the House. It is a Resolution guaranteeing the Government of Barbados with respect to the performance by LIAT of a number of agreements coming out of this lease arrangement with Bombardier Services Corporation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that it is fitting, given the role that the Parliament of Barbados and by extension the public of Barbados are asked to play now in LIAT and this arrangement with the Corporation leasing these aircraft to the company, that the financial situation of LIAT, through its annual reports or through some sort of interim report, should be laid in this Chamber. Mr. Deputy Speaker, apart from that, we should also have some indication by way of a business plan as to where LIAT is going. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is only fair, it should be here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the same Government that placed great store in the whole concept of accountability. The very first piece of legislation that this very Parliament passed had to do with respect to the Public Accounts Committee in keeping with this Government's so-called commitment to an increase in accountability.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have this agreement before us that could possibly, under certain circumstances, call for the taxpayers of this country to have to spend great sums of money. Mr. Deputy Speaker, notwithstanding how sturdy the De Havilland Dash-8 aircraft is supposed to be, it is not inconceivable, given what the lessor is asking for, that we could find ourselves in a situation of having to spend a great deal of money either repairing or replacing one of these aircraft.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while this agreement only speaks to two aircraft, it is possible that down the road when LIAT may need to lease further aircraft that this very Parliament could be called upon to do something similar, because remember as it is now, Barbados is the largest shareholder in LIAT. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we need to start on the right foot and there is a need for far more transparency on the affairs of LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, given LIAT's checkered past, a past that has suggested that it has always struggled to be viable, we need to be very clear on what exactly is the state of affairs with respect to LIAT. Sir, if we are asking the people of Barbados to provide not only financial guarantees but to guarantee the operational performance of LIAT, because we are talking about maintenance arrangements, I think that they should have a good snapshot of exactly what is going on with respect to LIAT (1974) Limited.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the last occasion that we debated LIAT, I had to rely on documents falling off the back of a truck that was leaving the Caribbean Development Bank and that type of thing. Sir, I do not think that is right at all. As an Opposition parliamentarian and as a taxpayer of this country, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South should move with haste to have a clear snapshot of the exact position of LIAT financially and otherwise as well as the operations department. They have had serious industrial problems at LIAT as well. I understand that they are settling the issue of the back pay for the pilots and so on, so we need to have a clear picture of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by extension, since he is in total agreement with that, I also hope that he would agree that what he said in here today with respect to the future of LIAT... The Honourable Member for St. Michael South said that the Government believes at this time that we should play this critical role with respect to keeping LIAT in the air. 11.00 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the airline industry does not operate like that of selling rotis or cars, there is the need to have long-term planning. Sir, at this time, the Government believes it should play this role but what exactly does Government feel about its future role? Are we going to continue to put more money into LIAT and eventually become the majority shareholder? Sir, in essence, it would become the national airline of Barbados. Are we going to try to coax the other Governments that seem to be somewhat reluctant, to become involved? Sir, that would be somewhat paradoxical because some of these countries in the Caribbean that appear to be somewhat disinterested in getting involved in LIAT, are the very countries that rely on LIAT for almost all of their airlift, Caribbean Star, notwithstanding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, are we going to force or coax these Governments to become involved or are we going to turn to the indigenous private sector, which has clearly shown a reluctance to become involved in the aviation industry? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that there needs to be some kind of long-term planning, at the Governmental level, which needs to be outlined.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I note that the only real document I have, which gives me any indication of the strategic thinking of this Government, does not contain anything specific, with respect to what role LIAT has to play in our future aviation. I am not talking about the National Strategic Plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the Minister, who has responsibility for International Transport, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, has said that he is in agreement, with respect to stating what is the position of LIAT. Sir, the Honourable Member must also agree that the

Government of Barbados must also expatiate on the relationship that it wants to have with LIAT. Sir, this does not relate to the here and now, but also with respect to the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to remind the Honourable Member for St. Michael South of two matters that were previously raised, which are becoming increasingly more relevant. Those two matters relate to the issue of the capacity of LIAT or should we say, all of the other regional carriers because I heard him talking about the multilateral arrangements that exist for aviation in CARICOM.

Sir, we are told there is going to be 50 000 visitors in the region next year for Cricket World Cup, 2007. I remember hearing, at least two years ago, that part of the reason we had to move with such haste to deal with LIAT, was because of the anticipated inflow and that we would be ensuring that we, as a region, would be benefiting from the obvious increase in air travel that would have been occurring during that period.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can tell you, the experiences that certainly the Honourable Members on This Side have had and the reports that we are getting, suggest to me that nothing has really changed, with respect to regional air travel in the Caribbean. Sometimes even during a touring team or a regional cricket team, we can hear about luggage going missing. Therefore, it is actually almost scary to think about what is going to happen, when the Cricket World Cup, 2007, occurs. Sir, are we going to just seed that extra business to Caribbean Star, which already has access to Mr. Standford's chequebook and therefore money would be no object, or is it that carriers from outside of the region would come into the region temporarily and would enjoy all of the sweets?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are issues that were raised two years ago, which the Opposition has asked questions about. In fact, there was even a suggestion that perhaps Government should look beyond air travel. Sir, these ideas were all laughed at but now here we are, in the exact position in which we were two years ago and with no apparent plan for dealing with that situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also remember, we heard a lot of grand things about the fact that all the carriers in the region were going to come together and were going to work in collaboration with each other. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South said that he went to a meeting with Regional Prime Ministers and that he felt so good sitting with these men. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter could not have made it to the meeting and therefore the Honourable Member for St. Michael South deputised for him. The Honourable Member was so fussy with himself, that he came back with a number of grand promises.

He talked about the fact that Bahamas Air, BWIA, Cayman Islands Airways, and everybody would be coming together, and that there would have been a number of plans. Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing has happened along those lines and we need to know why. Sir, let us imagine if something had actually been done at that time, where we would be now, with respect to dealing with some of the high cost of aviation now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Honourable Member's credit, he spoke about the airlines in the region coming together to purchase aviation fuel in bulk. I imagine that would be a serious cost factor now, with the price of oil nearly \$80 per barrel. Sir, here it is now that again, there was a lot of pretty talk and no action, while the cost of aviation has now become unbearable for so many in this region. Sir, perhaps it might have been somewhat affordable, if something had been done at that time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was also the issue of insurance, as this is an expensive commodity for commercial aircraft. We were hearing that the region would have been approaching the insurance companies as a group and obviously would have been able to enjoy certain savings. It was said that by approaching the insurance companies, as this was a very specialised type of insurance required, there would have been a number of savings that would have been enjoyed. Sir, we have heard nothing on that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to get past the talk. Therefore, the Honourable Member comes here, every time there is a debate on LIAT, and say that a number of things would be implemented. Sir, it is time to have some action.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe that the citizens of Barbados have recognised that in order for us to become a hub for commercial activities, given the Caribbean Single Market and Economy environment into which we appear to be moving, it is only natural that we should try to do what we could, with respect to LIAT. Sir, I would like to say that a responsible Opposition cannot simply sit back and allow LIAT to continue losing money, without any clear ideas as to where we are going. Sir, a number of difficult decisions would have to be made.

Sir, I understand the gentleman, who has been put as Chief Executive Officer of LIAT, has been highly touted. He is an airline doctor. I do not remember his name but LIAT has had some excellent Chief Executive Officers in the past. I know one Chief Executive Officer, who is a very capable gentleman. He has told me a number of stories. He has told me of circumstances where decisions were made, either at the Board level or at the operational level, where Chief Executive Officers would have received calls from certain Prime Ministers of the region, in relation to those very decisions that were made at those levels. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the reality. It is okay to have someone, who

is very competent but the environment in which LIAT operates, would need to be looked at carefully.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think more so than hiring some highly-touted airline doctor, it would be more important to establish the environment in which LIAT operates because it is not fair for Bombardier to insist on the Government of Barbados, which is providing a Guarantee, that Government has to go into an agreement as a commercial venture and yet the destinations that are going to be serviced by LIAT, are going to tell Barbados that it needs to have humanitarian considerations in this regard. It cannot work both ways.

Sir, I have noticed that the agreement, which is now part of the Laws of Barbados, at Clause 4.4, says specifically that there is no sovereign immunity. Therefore, I would want to hear specifically, if nothing else in the wrap up from the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, if he could speak about this issue of sovereign immunity because it is a very serious matter.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is for lawyers only, so we will talk to the Attorney-General (Acting).

Asides.

11.10 a.m.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to be very clear in establishing what exactly is the situation with respect to our relationship with LIAT. We need to have a clear idea of the future and where we are going with LIAT. I am concerned about the manner in which the Government of Barbados is managing the aviation sector because LIAT is now a critical component of it. Sir, these are the issues we need to consider.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have noticed that the airport is finally taking shape, that LIAT will eventually use Grantley Adams International Airport as it hub, that is the direction it is supposed to be moving in and we heard words to that effect last time. It seems as though Barbadians who are being asked to foot the cost with respect to LIAT are not now able to enjoy the benefits of the airport. Sir, "Red Caps" are being pushed out. We heard that trolleys...

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. No Red Cap men have been pushed out of anywhere. There is no intention by this administration to push Red Caps out of anywhere. The Honourable Member is misleading the House and it should be struck from the records. Sir, Red Caps are still operating within

the confines of the Arrival Hall at Grantley Adams International Airport and the Honourable Member needs to take that out.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all seriousness, I think that Ministry of International Transport has better try and seize control of operation at that airport. I understand that the Chairman and his friends have all the arrangements for duty-free concession and Red Caps are being told to sign an agreement.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. It is erroneous to say that anyone and his friends have taken control of the airport and have awarded themselves all the duty-free concession or whatever the reference was. You cannot come to this Chamber and make statements off the top of your head without any pause for thought. No Chairman or any friends have taken control of anything at Grantley Adams International Airport and it should be struck from the records because it is misleading.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. Even in making a Point of Order, a member must not mislead this House and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is grossly misleading this House, when he said that a Member said that anybody and their friends had taken over the operations of the airport. I distinctly heard the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central say that the Ministry should take over the operations at the airport. If the Minister does not want to do any work, that is his business but the recommendation of the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central was to rest the airport from certain people and their friends and have the Minister take back the airport operations.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition does not have a clue of what he speaks. The Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central said that the Chairman of Grantley Adams International Airport and his friends have taken over the airport and the duty-free concessions at the airport. Sir, he said that, it is in the records and I believe that it should be struck from the records. It is misleading and it is wrong, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central, could you please rephrase.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not expect that the mention of the term duty-free concession would have made the Honourable Member for St. Michael

South so hot and bothered. I merely said that all the arrangements for duty-free concessions have been put in place, that they are lucrative arrangements and that at the same time the Red Caps of Barbados are being asked to sign an agreement where their contract can be changed without notice to them after one week. They were made to sign the agreement while the Government was importing the trolleys which the tourists have access to free of cost, while the Red Caps have to pay \$16, \$18 and \$21. Sir, this is wrong and I am saying that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South needs to understand whose interest he is serving. There are Red Caps who live in the Bayland and Brittons Hill and it is wrong that they should have to put up with this while all the concessions...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is giving the House the impression that there are 30 new trolleys at the airport when the Honourable Minister is stating that it is not correct. I want to know whether the Minister is correct or whether the Chairman of the airport is doing something that the Minister does not know.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am prepared to make this a document of the House if for nobody's benefit but for the Honourable Member for St. Michael South because he does not know what is going on at the airport and he should know. I want the Honourable Member for St. Michael South to have a copy and to read the first line, that the contract and terms can be changed after one week's notice. How could a Red Cap go and make arrangements to 'trust' a few pieces of lumber, to get something from Courts or to borrow money...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is the Bill.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Sir, this is an agreement between Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. for the provision of Red Caps porter services at the airport. It is terrible to see what things have become at the airport. If we do not have adequate arrangements in place with respect to how we manage our airports? How can we now talk about managing an aircraft? Sir, how can we do it, when the Red Caps have to rent trolleys while tourists get them free? Mr. Deputy Speaker, could we not make an exception for the Red Caps. Sir, nothing was wrong with the system. It was a good system because it gave the visitors a chance to interact with Barbadians. Many of those Red Caps were good ambassadors to Barbados, now they are in danger of extinction. It is unfortunate and that would be the legacy of what is going on at that airport.

11.20 a.m.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Red Caps at Grantley Adams International Airport are not in danger of any extinction. Again, the

Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Red Caps are operating in the Arrival Hall at Grantley Adams International Airport. No one has put them out and no one will put them out. The Honourable Member wants to make his point, but the Red Caps are operating in the Arrival Hall and nobody is putting them out.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, proceed.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Sir, even in today's newspaper the Red Caps in Barbados are complaining about the situation, and the Honourable Member does not even know what is going on at that level. It is only obvious that the Honourable Member has lost track. It is obvious that an able-bodied tourist, is not going to use the services of a Red Cap. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to work this out.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: It is joint. If you are telling me that we are going to have some sort of joint arrangement, you should state what your policy is, and let the gentlemen and ladies who have done yeoman service for Barbados over the years, know what role they have to play. Personally, I believe that they should have a significant role to play, and should not be pushed to the fringe. Sir, that is a very serious point to our approach towards aviation and where we are going.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the clear confession by the Minister of International Transport, that apparently Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. is on automatic pilot, if Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. is an automatic pilot, I would say without a doubt that we on This Side are not going to support any guarantee. I do not care if it is performance or a financial guarantee that is not the point. We need financial information and a business plan, for LIAT to be laid in this Honourable House first. We are not going to support the guarantee otherwise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I sincerely hope that we could get this whole affair pulled together and do so rapidly.

I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt this can be seen as a Caribbean Single Market and Economy guarantee. It is clear that the Government of Barbados, must outline to this Parliament, whether LIAT is now becoming a private asset of Barbados, or there is a wider approach to LIAT.

Sir, there is one thing for the Government of Barbados to guarantee money to LIAT, but it is another when they

enter into an agreement, to service the airline called LIAT. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Government of Barbados makes a loan to LIAT, then that is a liability, owed to the Government of Barbados by LIAT. However, when the Government seeks to take control of the total maintenance costs of LIAT, that is another matter, the maintenance costs must then be quantified. If by chance LIAT defaults, there must be some arrangement, explaining to this Parliament how the money would be repaid to Barbados, after having to service the agreement with the other company. There must be a clear plan setting out whether there will be a liability to the Government of Barbados or it would be added to the shareholdership of the Government of Barbados.

We cannot come to Parliament and agree to a guarantee like this, without us first understanding the financial implication to the people of Barbados. I want to know if LIAT defaults and the loan has to be repaid, how will this money be treated. I also want to know whether it will be a loan, or it will be part of our shareholdership in LIAT. Sir, I also want to know if the same basis for LIAT, as set out in 1974, is now occurring, or whether it is jointly owned by Antigua and Barbados, and what it means to Barbados, after investing so much money into LIAT.

Sir, how is it that when Antigua was the majority shareholder, that the headquarters was moved from Barbados to Antigua? It is rather interesting, because LIAT was not the only one. We saw the same thing happening with the West Indies Cricket Board. Sir, why the headquarters is still in Antigua after we have pumped so much money into LIAT. This Parliament must have answers to those questions, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how we know that LIAT is losing money? Why are we guaranteeing money for LIAT, when we have no evidence that they are losing money? I want to see the figures and the guarantee that LIAT is losing money. Sir, I might be tricked. I am not sure. I cannot accept words just like that. Currently, the headquarters is in Antigua, and I do not know what is going on in the office, in Antigua. Yet, I am expected to be here in Parliament accepting the words of someone, who cannot guarantee me that the information from Antigua is correct.

Sir, all Honourable Members of this House must get the information, to assure us that there is a need to guarantee anything for LIAT. It is not that we are against the guarantee. Anybody who understands tourism within the Caribbean, would understand that we need LIAT and similar airlines to build the Caribbean base.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have always argued, that if we are serious about tourism, we must first build our base from

within the Caribbean, and then get the gravy from an extra-regional source.

Sir, today we are faced with a very serious decision, as to whether we are going to accept the words of someone, or get the information to substantiate the claim, that is being brought before Parliament. The claim is, that LIAT is losing money. Everybody can quote the amount of money, but nobody is prepared to justify the claim, by producing documents to show that LIAT is actually losing money.

Sir, I want to say that with LIAT operating this way, there will be no need for 30 carts at the airport. Based on what I see from projects and my opinion of World Cup 2007, we need in Barbados a special approach to tourism. Sir, no cart can talk to anyone. Sir, no cart can put luggage into a vehicle. There are the Red Caps who can do that, especially now that certain vehicles cannot go near the arrival hall. The Red Caps will take the luggage to the car park to satisfy the demand. We need to put a human approach to our service in Barbados and, stop relying on equipment to do it for us.
11.30 a.m.

We have argued and there are statistics to prove that the tourists who come to Barbados see the people of Barbados, as the most important asset. This is why community tourism is doing so well in Barbados.

Sir, if you read the *Visitor* newspaper or the *Sun Seeker* newspaper, whenever you ask tourists what they like about Barbados they tell you, the people. Therefore, if the people are the most important resource, why would we want to remove the people from the tourists, can somebody give me a logical reason? In other words, the people are so happy to see Barbadians interacting with them and that impression that is created by Barbadians to them, they are returning to Barbados based on the people and not the sun, sea, or the others.

Sir, we are now reversing the tourists. We are not satisfied to reverse our people because they are part of the masses, but we are now telling the tourists, "That is what you want but that is not what we are giving you." Therefore, why would we be surprised to see the tourists' arrivals in Barbados declining.

Sir, the reason the tourist arrivals in Barbados are declining is because we have moved away from what the tourists want. The tourists want to interact with the people and we are trying to put the tourists away from the people.

Sir, we warned this Government not to prioritise or corporatise the airport because there was one fear that once you have elected a Chairman to the Board – and I told the

Minister this – that the Minister would not be relevant. That is, after you have given the Chairman the power, that Chairman does not have to listen to the Minister anymore, because it is private. It is run by a Board. It is not run by Cabinet.

Sir, what you are seeing at the airport now, that even before there was a Board at the airport, the Chairman was behaving in a particular way. Now that there is a Board, the Chairman does not even know that there is a Minister responsible for international transport. The Minister of International Transport does not even know what the Chairman is doing in his Ministry.

Sir, one has to ask where the buck stops. Does it stop at the Chairman, or at the Minister? We as politicians have to be careful how we are responsible to 270 000 people, and we allow one man to decide what he is going to do, as it relates to our most expensive asset.

Sir, again, our most expensive asset is now being dictated to by one man, who has now invited all friends and associates to have the best of the beef in Barbados. The best cuts are now being exported outside of Barbados to be brought back into Barbados, and to be delivered to persons that do not know anything about sugar canes or cutting sugar canes in Barbados.

Sir, when we speak about LIAT, we are talking about transport. When we come to deal with the Transport Board, everybody tells you that the Transport Board must be seen as a commercial entity.

Sir, I want to make this particular point. The Transport Board should never be seen as a commercial entity, because the two greatest pieces of social transformation to ever come to this country was free secondary education and the transport system, and people must appreciate that point.

Sir, we come to this Parliament and we guarantee money for external sources. We have no problem in guaranteeing money for external sources, but yet still when we come to the Transport Board or the University of the West Indies, we believe – and there are people to substantiate this particular point – that students should pay.

These same persons will tell you that we should run international airlines, and give donations to international airlines, not realising that once we build up our human resources, with another country, we have a more productive country, and a more educated country to face this competitive world.

We have to be serious and understand what we are all about but it is clear to me that in this country Barbados, it is not about money. It is about the way the money is being

spent and who is spending the money. In other words, the Chairman of the Transport Board will be hauled before the call-in programmes, will be used all over Barbados, will be lambasted and accused of wasting the taxpayers' money, in running the transport system, because he is transporting the masses of people in Barbados, but the Chairman that is running the LIAT or anything would not be subjected to those accusations.

Sir, I am saying that we have to be serious and understand what is happening. I am telling the Minister of Tourism that the Honourable Member has to understand that the buck will stop at the Honourable Member's desk. I know that the Honourable Member is always happy when the Opposition delivers speeches like these, especially when it involves the Chairman, because the Honourable Member would like to deliver them too.

It is about time that the Honourable Member understands that if the Honourable Member does not deliver speeches like these, that the honourable Chairman would continue to take him to his grave. Sir, what is happening at the airport cannot be in the best interest of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

The Honourable Member has to understand, Sir, that the Honourable Member must tell the Chairman that it is true you are operating a Board, but I am operating in the interest of 270 000 people, plus the Guyanese and all other Jews, Indians, Israelis, *et cetera*, who are living in Barbados now.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a serious matter and we, as an Opposition, will help the Minister providing he appeals for light. It is clear that the Minister needs to appeal for light. The Minister is in a Ministry called, International Transport, and the Minister has not demonstrated that the honourable gentleman is in control of that Ministry.

When the people in Barbados speak of international transport, Sir, one name comes up all the time, a Brewer. I do not know we are making beer now. Every time here is talk about, "Red Caps", shops, leasing of the airplanes, one hears nothing about the Minister. The Minister would tell me, when it comes to tourism, check the hardware, check the numbers, check the flights, check the revenue but when it comes to the airport, the Minister remains like a little quiet mouse, chest in the air, and nothing to say.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, I would protect him. He is my friend. He cannot say these things but I will say them for him.

Sir, I will put any money on this bet, that the honourable Chairman of the Grantley Adams International Airport would not have done it to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, had he been the Minister. I am willing to bet anybody in here that had the Minister for St. Michael North been the Minister of International Transport that the Chairman of Grantley Adams International Airport would not have done it. Sir, had he done it and the Minister was not able to act, the Minister would resign, like he did with the Fair Trading Commission. This is the evidence we have of that Minister.

Sir, all of a sudden, the most powerful Minister, when it comes to talk, sits in his seat and allows the honourable gentleman to believe that he is drinking Irish Whiskey and not Barbadian rum.

I want people to know that the best alcoholic drink in Barbados, do not mind I do not drink it, is Extra Old from Mount Gay, not Irish whiskey from Ireland.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: It is Extra Old rum from Mount Gay and not the Irish whiskey from Ireland.

Sir, if we are going to be dealing with Barbados, we should be talking about Mount Gay Extra Old, and not Irish Whiskey.

11.40 a.m.

Sir, the Honourable Member must understand that we are in this Parliament to represent Barbadians and that if there are any concessions at the airport to be given out that Barbadians should get the majority of them not Irish whiskey. We are here to export Barbadian rum not Irish whiskey. Sir, it is clear that this honourable gentleman has now removed himself from the good taste of St. Lucy rum to Irish whiskey, all because of the Chairman.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, LIAT needs support but we also need information. Sir, I could bet you today that LIAT is making money. Sir, the Honourable Member cannot challenge me on that because he cannot produce a document to prove me wrong. Sir, no one is going to come in here and ask me to guarantee something because a company is supposed to be losing money if they do not produce the evidence because it is the taxpayers money that we are picking up. We are not asking for write-offs for LIAT. What we are guaranteeing is that if they incur further losses that we would pay for the maintenance cost providing there are shortfalls. Sir, this is a very serious thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say to this Government that as the parliamentary representative for the constituency of St. Lucy, I do not want to come to this Parliament to sign any guarantees for the Transport Board anymore since we are so quick to guarantee loans for external sources. I believe that the guarantee for the Transport Board...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you get back to the matter.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am not deflecting, I am just drawing a comparison. Sir, I am not anticipating, I am saying that the same way that we could come here so fast for a guarantee for LIAT that when it comes to the Transport Board, we must do the same for it because it is the same mode of transportation for moving people, the difference is that one is by air and the other is by land.

Sir, I am not even aware of what is coming next. It is only the Leader of the House and yourself that might know that, Sir. I do not deal with those matters, Sir.

Sir, I am saying that every time we come to this House at Estimates time that we need to put in a subsidy for the Transport Board because it is a social cost that we have to carry. Sir, I have no problem in supporting a subsidy for the Transport Board, it is all about moving the masses of people and increasing the productive capacity of the country. Sir, the same argument can be used for LIAT. All we are saying is that we recognise that LIAT might need some support but the claim must be substantiated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no one should come to this House and use words. I do not want anyone to just come and tell me that LIAT is losing money, they need to give me reasons and actual statistics. I am not an economist to forecast and based everything on the subjective, I want to see the actual facts. Sir, if the Minister wants to convince this House that LIAT needs support, all we are asking is for the Minister to bring the figures before the House, we do not need assumptions. Sir, that is exactly what is happening here. We are in here assuming. We are in here making fools of ourselves by assuming that LIAT is losing money when in truth and in fact we are not sure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all I am asking of the Minister, providing that he does not have to ask the Chairman of the Airport for this information, is to hold us in faith and lay the necessary document so that we could peruse them and make a sensible judgement on that particular matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are people in here who are looking at it. Sir, if that is done, furthermore than guaranteeing the maintenance repairs, we might even suggest that you might be able to throw in the fuel, but the Minister

has to bring the figures to show us. Sir, we do not want to see estimates, we want to see the actual figure. Sir, once we see the actual figures, we would make a value judgment and we might throw in something for him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member has to understand that this House is the highest authority and it must be respected as such. The Honourable Member cannot come in here and assume that because a beautiful speech is made in this House that all Honourable Members would accept the speech based on words, when in truth and in fact, it should be based on figures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you, I would like you to tell the Honourable Member for St. Michael South not to prejudge this House and that any future guarantees that are needed that the Honourable Member has first to provide the necessary information so that we can judge them and pass them. I am saying that based on what was presented in this House today that this guarantee cannot be accepted by This Side, because I have no intention in my political life, in running behind, any truck, van, plane or anything looking for a document.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rules of the House are clear. Too often we have been seeing where information should be laid in this House but it is not laid and where regulations should come with amendments but they are not put, yet people quote from them.

Sir, nobody is going to disrespect me in this Chamber and then expect me to bow to their wishes. After 12 years in this Parliament, Sir, I demand better of this Parliament. Therefore, it is through your office, Sir, that I request of you, full information and full disclosure.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are debating or discussing a very important matter of an airline which has been part of the regional landscape for an extremely long time. Therefore, it is a matter which should engage the attention of this Honourable House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, after listening to the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, I believe that one remains unconvinced as to why the Government and the people of Barbados should once again be issuing guarantees in relation to this matter. On This Side, our chief spokesman has already spoken to the issue of being unsupportive to this gesture not because we want to be unsupportive but because we have been waiting too long to be presented with financials relative to the operation of LIAT (1974) Limited. We cannot be constantly going to the taxpayers of Barbados, either in guaranteeing loans, in writing off debts or

doing as we are doing today, providing a guarantee relative to these funds for LIAT (1974) Limited.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are running a regional business of which the people of Barbados, not the Government... Sometimes we are sidetracked that the Government operates on its own behalf, but the Government operates on behalf of the people's trust, and that is important. Sir, if we are operating on behalf of the people's trust, we have to create the level of transparency and accountability in which the people themselves can repose confidence. As one of those people, even though I sit in This Place, I am not confident at all, and we on This Side are not confident at all, that all is being done in the best interest of the citizens of Barbados in dealing with the issue of LIAT (1974) Limited.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the debate has waxed wide, and so it should be. Sir, when one is dealing with transportation services, particularly airline transportation services, one has to be cognisant of the fact that the movement of people across the relatively small space of the Caribbean is absolutely important and one would want to see LIAT, since it is owned by the people of the Caribbean, as a viable entity. 11.50 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the skirmishes with which LIAT seems to operate and the kinds of support that seem to be given by those in charge in the various Governments in the region, these skirmishes cannot continue. One has to be aware that we can no longer be throwing money down a bottomless pit, or that we can no longer be throwing water into the proverbial ocean. One has to see, at some point, a return on one's investment or some sensible operational strategy being placed before the people of the Caribbean but more particularly the people of Barbados, who have taken on a major mandate in relation to LIAT (1974) Limited.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that this airline beats heavily within our bosom but at the same time we can no longer crush ourselves, in order to maintain the kind of structures and systems that are not proving to be effective at this time. The Honourable Member for the St. Michael South Central has pointed out the fact that we need serious rationalisation. We need the operational and strategic development plan relative to this airline. Therefore, in seeing that and in seeing the financials, we would want to encourage the citizens of these countries to utilise the services of LIAT (1974) Limited, as we shuttle across the region, as we try to enforce and to give sense, meaning and purpose, to the whole notion of Caribbean unity and Caribbean integration. Therefore, as part of that movement and focus, this airline is absolutely important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a point that has been raised, which has been stoutly defended, which has left me

somewhat in a state of amazement. It concerns the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, who appeared like a fish out of water, relative to the impending treatment to what we call the Red Caps at the Grantley Adams International Airport. It is possibly the fifth time that I have found the Honourable Member to be scrambling to find balance. This is uncharacteristic of the kind of behaviour and the stout chest which the Honourable Member puts up in this Honourable House. It is obvious that the Honourable Member is absolutely and totally unaware of what is taking place at the Grantley Adams International Airport, an airport that bears the name of one of our National Heroes, who was a stout soldier in the struggle of the liberalisation of the people of Barbados. This struggle goes back into the late 1930s and 1940s, therefore, I cannot understand how the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, who is a progeny of that struggle, could now stand still and allow the kind of travesties to take place at the Grantley Adams International Airport. This would not only be in relation to these working-class individuals, who try to mete out a bare living, by providing the kind of service as they do, to the people at the airport.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these persons in authority at the airport have dealt a hard slap with a double-edged sword to previous workers up there and the profound silence of the individual, who is always sartorial in his dress and sometimes in his speech, was deafening. Sir, we have not heard any utterances coming from the Honourable Member. Those persons in authority have now moved onto those unfortunate persons who shuttle the luggage, either from the Arrival Hall to the outside or from the curbs to the various stations or airlines.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when is the Honourable Member for St. Michael South going to end his silence? Sir, at the end of the day, we cannot blame anyone else, as the Honourable Member stands in charge. He stands like an emperor, robed nakedly and does not want anyone to say that is how he looks. Sir, this pretense must stop. The Honourable Member has to come to grips with what is happening up there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some years ago, I was proud when I heard the Right Honourable Prime Minister saying that "Massa day done." Sir, I am only repeating the phrase. When the Prime Minister made that speech, it had caused some consternation in large capitals of this world. Sir, it now appears to me that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is happy that "Massa day" is not done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a humble servant of the scores of people who make a living at the Grantley Adams International Airport, I would want for the Honourable Member to go there and get a sense of what is taking place.

I do not want the Honourable Member to go there, parading with a bevy of people from the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc., walking about inspecting the state of the physical structure of the airport. That is only important as a piece of shelter and as a place of delivery, but the point of the humanity in dealing with people seems to be lost on the Honourable Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have not cast stones at the other Honourable Members on That Side because I believe they too are being gulled by the pronouncements of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see the Honourable Member for St. James Central sitting in consternation, his body almost rigid, when the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central presented this contract for the 'Red Caps' at the airport, in circumstances where this contract has events and remedies of default. This contract sets out that persons would have one verbal warning, one written warning and then the contract would be terminated.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: That is contained here. I do not believe they were given a chance. It is part of the coercive mechanism, which are emerging within this society and within this country, which, I believe to be absolutely dangerous. Sir, the Right Excellent Bussa would get off his perch and would march from Bayleys once again, across the landscape of Barbados, if this does not stop. We are mistreating the citizens of Barbados. We are mistreating the workers of Barbados and, therefore, in the same way that the Right Excellent Bussa said that it must be stopped, the citizens of this country are getting angry. We have a responsibility to dissipate that anger.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these citizens are constituents of yours, I know them well. They are constituents of the Honourable Members for Christ Church South, St. Philip South, St. Philip West, and across the other parts of Barbados. These are the people who go there every day, to make a living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is correct, as has been stated by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, that the major capital investment should redound to the benefits of the working-class of Barbados, otherwise the investment should not be made. Sir, for whom are we making the investment? The investment is being made for the workers and people of Barbados, that is why it is a showpiece.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: It runs in my blood because for more than 30 years, I have been living a stone's throw from the runway. Therefore, the planes resound in my bosom and when those workers go to the airport to make a living, they should be making it in peace.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not saying that the workers should not have to operate with rules, with the right attitude, the right discipline or the right behaviour because we support those things. It is not the behaviour of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South that seems to operate with disdain, in relation to the workers of Barbados. That is not what we want. I believe and hope that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South would fall upon his knees some day coming soon, and that he would have the hands of a good pastor or preacher rest upon his shoulder and that they would urge that whatever it is that is in his bosom, would be cast aside. Sir, the Honourable Member needs to be purged. Sir, something wrong is going on here because the Honourable Member keeps smiling when workers are under threat, when persons are behaving like 'Massa day' is not yet done, on the parts and backs of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, unless Government starts bringing what is right and stop obfuscating the issues and the facts, we on This Side, the Honourable Opposition, would not be supporting any decisions made by Government. Government must look at those issues and must deliver all of the facts necessary, to the people's representatives, before we could support any decisions. In the absence of that, the answer from This Side is an unequivocal no and furthermore, until you lift the heavy boot off the backs of the workers at the airport, you will not get the support of This Side for anything brought to this House. We stand principally committed to the workers of Barbados. Until that heavy boot and yoke around the necks of workers are lifted, there will be no support whatsoever.

12.00 noon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, may 'crapaud smoke his pipe.' Sir, I thank you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to make a brief intervention in this very important matter. I want to say at the beginning that I find no quarrel in the sentiments as expressed by the Honourable Members who have spoken on the Other Side with respect to the matters relating to the treatment of the Red Caps at the Grantley Adams International Airport. Having said that, I think it is important for us to try to place this debate in a context of that which is taking place with respect to LIAT.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order, please. Honourable Member, please proceed.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, try as we will, we cannot turn our backs on the fact that as dim a view as any of us in this House would take about that which is taking place at Grantley Adams International Airport in some respect, one has to focus on the substance of this debate, which is the matter relating to the Guarantee to LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that Barbados, unlike Trinidad and Guyana, cannot take a position in which it is largely or substantially independent of LIAT. The point has been made very clearly that Barbados has a deep relationship with LIAT (1974) Limited. In fact, when you bear in mind that over 33 000 long-stay visitors came to the country from CARICOM in 2005, you understand clearly the nature of the relationship which we have with LIAT. When you bear in mind the interlining which takes place and the fact that to get onto American Airlines, British Airways or Virgin Airlines that many people from St. Vincent and Dominica have to find themselves here, you understand the substance of that which we are talking about with respect to LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not fight with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy on this issue. The last Audited Financial Statement from LIAT was in 2004 but we have a serious judgement call which we have to make in the context of tourism and the importance that LIAT has for the tourism industry in Barbados. Sir, I am saying to you that the judgement call is simply this. Is it, or is it not fundamental for Barbados, being the major shareholders to do all within its power to keep that company afloat? I feel that we have no choice but to fall on the side of keeping LIAT afloat. There is a burden which we carry in doing that, the burden is not done without caution and it is certainly not undertaken without some benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central has put it in the correct context. There are a number of non-commercial parliamentary principles which have literally contaminated the operational environment of LIAT but it did not just get that way. Sir, where we are today did not happen overnight. It has been a problem that has plagued not only LIAT but all state-run airlines in this region. Sir, a number of non-commercial principles and non-commercial considerations have plagued LIAT. I do not know if you can place it as high as being a principle but it is a non-commercial considerations rooted largely in the emotional, rooted largely in that which is political expedient and rooted largely in a number of other things but having nothing to do with sound commercial practices and operations which has tended to contaminate regional air transportation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have heard talk about the private sector getting involved and we all know the history. There have been efforts at private-sector-led airlines in the Caribbean and they have collapsed. Even the successful story of Air Jamaica under private sector leadership did not stand the test of time. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Governments have had to play that which has come to be understood as an entrepreneurial role with respect to air traffic. It is not the ideal situation but it is the reality within which this region finds itself and with respect to LIAT because of the fundamentals to which I refer at the very beginning and I do not think that the Government of Barbados as the major shareholder has much of a choice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where then do we fall? Do we just accept that moral suasion, telling regional Prime Ministers that which ought to be done and making a lot of normalative, idealistic suggestions would solve the problem or do you try to find a practical implementable policy within the existing framework that you have? Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have clearly decided that you have to deal with a practical, implementable policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Barbados has said clearly that because of the fact that there is such a heavy reliance that we place on LIAT and no matter how much we may be inclined to scoff at it, we cannot do without LIAT, if our tourism industry is to maintain the kind of characteristics which it now has. Having accepted that, Sir, and accepting that you are holding 37.8 per cent of the shares, that the next largest shareholder is Antigua with 20 something per cent of the shares, that you then have to literally take the bull by the horns and structure the improvement.

Sir, perhaps it is with herculean efforts but I take dim view of what might have transpired. I think all Honourable Members of this House would take a dim view of what they read in the paper about Red Caps but the reality is that this debate has to be about the future of LIAT and its relationship with Barbados. We have taken a decision that the commercial hub of LIAT has to be moved...

Asides.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that nobody should speak about the Red Caps yet he applauded when people spoke about the Red Caps. Sir, I am not going to debate the issue because I feel the same way that the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central feels but at least, I want us to speak to the fact that in trying to correct the problem with LIAT that Barbados has taken a decision that the commercial hub of LIAT should be moved to this country by the end of the year. We have taken the decision and already there is a marketing office in Barbados. We have

said that we want to ensure that the administrative action, the management, the finance accounting and the human resource aspect of the business is continued to be governed by the best possible commercial practices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have accepted that it is an unwholesome situation. Let us be candid about what are some of the problems of LIAT. I do not just want us to say that non-commercial practices have crept into the operation. This is what we are fighting against in very blunt terms.
12.10 p.m.

Sir, you have minority shareholders, who have a disproportionate employment representation at LIAT above and beyond that of the majority shareholder. It is not something that is necessarily done on the principles of merit. It is an employment consideration which is taking place in LIAT. It has deep roots because if you come from a certain jurisdiction, so therefore you would get a job from LIAT far more easily than other people, having little or nothing to do with strict principles of merit. There is a need to build transparency into that process.

Sir, we accept that it is not a sound commercial practice. There is a tendency, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central said, at the highest level, Sir, even Prime Ministers pick up the telephone and seek to intervene in the day-to-day business of LIAT; that cannot be a sound commercial principle. Sir, people attending Board meetings when perhaps they had no right to be there. All that has been happening. Therefore, in trying to create a situation in which you are governing, a more sound fashion, the accounting, financial and all other management practices at LIAT, you are taking a vital first step. That is where the Government of Barbados stands on the matter.

Sir, with respect to the guarantee, this guarantee is alleviating an existing requirement. We have to be very frank about these things. There is a burden which is placed on LIAT, with respect to maintenance. At the rate of US\$50 000 per month, per plane, a company which is cash-strapped is going to find itself ploughing all that it has into maintenance. We have to be realistic about this situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have Barbadians, our neighbours in the region and visitors to this region travelling on LIAT daily, and the best possible practice cannot be that an airline that is starting to cannibalise its equipment, in order to keep those other pieces of in the air, continues to do that. You cannot just be picking pieces off a plane to get another plane in the air. Therefore, you have to find a way to make sure that there is efficiency built into the maintenance of the aircraft.

It is not only a good commercial practice. It is not only because the Government of Barbados has an interest in

ensuring that LIAT maintains its existence in the air. It is because there is a basic humanism that has to be looked at. That the people of this country, people of the region and visitors to our shores, should be able to go to sleep at night, with a certainty as best as possible in today's volatile air transport world, that at least that which is necessary is done, to ensure efficiency of the maintenance system and best practices are being looked after. So you have a guarantee put in place. It is not to say that you are forking out the money to do it now, but you are saying that in the event, that there is a failure on LIAT's part, there is some entity which will be prepared to stand up and pay the bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we do not do it then what happens? Perhaps, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South should have said this at the beginning when he made his initial speech. There was no doubt in the mind of Bombardier, that they did not have the confidence in a number of the other shareholding jurisdictions to live up to the expectations. Again, Barbados at some stage has to recognise, that for our sins or for our efficiency and commitment to good governance, that they are people out there who say that if we are going to continue to do business with this region, then there is a role for Barbados to play. I do not think that the Opposition wants to find fault with that. I would hope that the Opposition is not finding fault with that. I am hoping that somewhere in their hearts, the Opposition can see that is at least a vote of confidence in this country and in the management of the country.

Sir, I am seeing a face suggesting that they may not have hearts, and that is another matter. Sir, there is a commitment in the past to make provision within your accounting system to pay money into the escrow account.

Mr. Deputy Speaker we are saying by way of this guarantee, that requirement to pay US\$50 000 per plane per month would now come to an end. I think that it alleviates an unbearable operational cost, and it is a useful shot in the arm.

Sir, even as I look at this Resolution, I realise that there is here food for thought, for those of us who are not only prepared to see this Honourable House as a theatre, upon which you perform when you want to find fault, but also there is also an opportunity for those of us who see that there is a role that we can play in charting a way forward for this country, in developing opportunities for this country, where there is obviously a demand but we are still unable to satisfy that demand, but should be able to do.

Sir, this same Resolution makes provision for there to be arbitration in the event of dispute, that dispute between Bombardier, under the Agreement, and LIAT or Barbados, would be settled by arbitration. The fact of the matter is, such

arbitrations would be done in accordance with the principles of United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. It will be governed by that.

Sir, as we look through the provision here, we see that in the event of a dispute between Bombardier and Barbados, the Seat of arbitration would be in New York.

We have already said, when we had to go to arbitration in another matter two years ago, we got the judgement this year, with respect to the Law of the Sea, again, the Seat of arbitration was outside of this region. The time has come for us, even as we debate these matters, to pause and reflect on the capacity that we have. We do not lack the human resource capacity in this country or region in matters of law. The time has come for us to begin to see Barbados, as a potential Seat for commercial arbitration. So that events, such as those which this document, that we are debating portend, in the event that those events take place, we do not have to go elsewhere to use other people's resources, pay transportation bills, use other people's skills and to put money in other people's hands, but rather that we would be in a position to do these things right here within the region, right here at home with Barbados being a centre for commercial arbitration.

I think that in like vein, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, as he spoke, as I said, I do not find great fault if the Honourable Member is going to condemn such as has been offered to this Honourable House about what happened with the Red Caps. Nobody in this Honourable House would feel good about that. I think that we cannot be only finding fault and going down that road forever.

Sir, there is a good neighbour principle involved in our relationship with CARICOM. Let us understand this clearly. Let us stop beating the single market opportunity over the head with a big rock or big stick. The fact of the matter is, regional transportation must grow, regional transportation is fundamental, if you cannot have the movement of people, if you do not have that which must move the people.

I am one who believes that an ideal world would be a world for this region in which Air Jamaica, BWIA and LIAT, Suriname Airways and Guyana Airways were able to rationalise operations. Sir, that is not going to happen. I do not expect I am going to see it in my lifetime. I am being very candid with you. So we have to work with that which we have. We have to do that over which we have some control.

12.20 p.m.

As a majority shareholder, the Government of Barbados has a moral duty. It is duty bound, not only to the people of Barbados but to the people of this region, to ensure that inter-island transport between the Leeward and the

Windward Islands and Barbados does not entirely end up controlled by a white man from the United States of America, who does not have at his heart, and does not have at the root of his conscience, the ongoing well-being of our integration effort.

I have seen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my lifetime, when BWIA came off a route that took us from Barbados to Puerto Rico, and American Airlines was given the opportunity to put BWIA out of that route. They did so successfully and you could get from here to Puerto Rico for \$300, once American Airlines had the monopoly. Sir, gone for ever were the days, when that could happen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is that we have to use this as an opportunity, not only to save LIAT but to find ingenious methods of improving on the quality of our inter-regional transportation. I agree with the Honourable Member who introduced this Bill, that this is an opportunity for LIAT to make itself more efficient. There is no pride to be found in 2006 to be calling LIAT by the acronym, 'late, if at all', 'leave Island any time' and all those other things. There must be a commitment to build in the efficiencies.

I take you back to the beginning, therefore, that part of the principle is that once you are in a position, as a majority shareholder to make some hard commercial decisions, you have, under your wing, an opportunity to more efficiently manage the accounting system, more efficiently manage the finance system, more efficiently manage the human resource arrangements and more efficiently manage all aspects of operational management.

Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you take that opportunity – that bull by the horns – and you say, you will restructure the airline in such a way as to make it more competitive.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel, quite frankly, that if it were not for the unfortunate development at the Grantley Adams International Airport with respect to the Red Caps, there would have been no contribution to be made from the Democratic Labour Party on this matter, because the whole thing has been bankrupt of policy. Sir, as far as they are concerned, this debate today was about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has not been about the way in which you can, as a majority shareholder, sit on top of a situation and bring a better corporate governance to bear upon it. It has not been about the future of the relationship with the single market. Sir, even though the Resolution obviously in glaring terms says that this region does not have the capacity to arbitrate a simple commercial agreement, it has not been about how best we could build out that capacity, and capitalise on opportunities for this type of business.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that all of those failures suggest, yet again, the unsuitability of those on That Side to do anything more, other than what the Honourable Member for the City calls, 'rah rah' and behave bad and drag down.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 1.30 p.m. today.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House be now suspended until 1.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

12.24 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate and to raise certain matters under the contract of employment in relation to the Red Caps at the airport that was so raised by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central. Sir, the treatment of the Red Caps at the Grantley Adams International Airport *vis-à-vis* their rights under the contract of employment was alluded to by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central during the debate.

Sir, when we examined the contract that the Red Caps entered into with the company...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not think I will allow you to go down that road, I gave one of your Colleagues a chance, so let us get to the crux of the matter, which is the LIAT matter.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, what was central was the rights of those workers and the allegations that were made in relation to those workers having the benefits in relationship with that company.

Sir, I respectfully submit that we operate in an environment where we must have equality of bargaining power between parties.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is raising a number of issues that are not even relevant to the legislation before us, and I would really like you to rule. Sir, under the Standing

Order 38, an Honourable Member cannot speak to issues that are not relevant to the matter that is being dealt with. Relevance is important.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, matters were raised by the principal spokesman for the Government as well as on This Side in relation to that matter. Sir, there is the issue in relation to equal bargaining power for those persons. Sir, when a visitor comes to this country on LIAT, the second person that he meets is a Red Cap, so we must treat that person with some degree of respect. Therefore, when I heard my friend mentioned the issue they have under their contract of employment, I thought that we should be in a position, especially in a day and age when we are speaking about the rights of workers and the benefits that must accrue to workers, to pay some relevance to it.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you please move on now to the Bill.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Yes, I will move on.

Sir, the grievances under the contract of employment...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not think you are moving on to the real Bill which is before the House. I told you to move off from the airport workers, that is not part of it. I gave your spokesman a lot of latitude and I will not allow it to go much further than that, so proceed with the Bill.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, the spokesman from This Side asked for some clarification in relation to page 9 subsection 4 of the Resolution, but no clarification was given on the issue. Therefore, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is under a duty, in the interest of transparency and accountability, to speak to this House and clarify any matter arising out of page 9, paragraph 4.4. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is time that when the Opposition raise matters of concern that we receive some answers and some results from That Side.

Sir, a lot was mentioned about the issue of documentation before this House. Sir, we came here today to deal with a matter involving the guarantee and we have not had the information or any documentation in relation to the accounts of LIAT, and we are now forced today to make a decision in the absence of any detailed information.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South has a moral duty when he is wrapping up to provide us with the evidence or information that this Government is making its decision on.

Sir, I believe that you should save me from the sharks from the Other Side.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I can hear you quite well.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Okay, Sir.

Sir, when we look at the terms and the conditions of the guarantee, there are some great issues in relation to the terms and conditions, and I wonder whether the Minister of Tourism read the terms and conditions under this Resolution. The terms and conditions are numbered and they are set out here. Sir, my friend, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, is now reading them for the first time.

Sir, paragraph 4.5 states that the execution, delivery and performance by the Government of this Guarantee have been duly authorised by all necessary action, approvals (including Parliamentary approval) and consents required by the laws of Barbados.

1.40 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we, the Opposition, can only raise these matters. Therefore, I am asking the Honourable Member, in his wrap-up speech, to give us clarification in relation to Paragraph 4.5. That is another issue that needs to be checked.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a matter of fact, matters come to this Parliament and if the Opposition addresses them, the Other Side goes and takes credit for them. Therefore, I am asking the Honourable Member to clarify or to speak to the legal representative from That Side, to get an opinion, so that he could clarify matters to this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Opposition is also wondering about the issue and the aspect of sovereignty and how it relates to certain clauses in this Terms of Contract. Sir, I want to reiterate the fact that the players in this industry, who make a contribution, including the workers, must be respected. Therefore, in this regard, Government must give due respect and notice to them. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that Government is under a moral duty to give us that clarification and information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is all I have to say in relation to this matter.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make a few comments, with respect to this Resolution. At the outset, I want to join with my colleagues to indicate quite clearly that there are many conditions that need to be met, that are not now being met, which prevent the Opposition from supporting this particular Guarantee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of an understanding of the importance of LIAT, generally with respect to the movement of traffic into Barbados and especially from the CARICOM region, the Opposition has given our support, time and time again, to financials and other types of support for LIAT. We believe that LIAT plays an important role and that it will continue to play an important role, regarding the tourism development product of Barbados. However, we cannot continue to guarantee debt on top of other debts. We cannot continue to support an airline that seems not to be able to operate profitably within the modern arena, irrespective of what support is given to LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is this Administration that has sought to increase LIAT's shareownership. It did not happen overnight, nor did it happen by accident. It was this Administration that thought it was important enough to the tourism product in Barbados, to go out and to garner the major shareholdership of LIAT, irrespective of whether or not LIAT was in significant debt, or whether or not committing Barbados to guarantee funds to debts for LIAT was either the right or wrong thing to do, given the history of LIAT's prolonged debts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. James Central indicating that the last audited financial statements were for 2004. Sir, if I am to accept that statement from the Honourable Member, it would, indeed, be an abomination, for Government to come to this Honourable Chamber, to ask the Opposition to support a Guarantee for a debt, in circumstances where there is no audited financial statements for 2005.

Sir, if there were a 2005 audited financial statement, we could at least start with that, to find out what is the true state of affairs with respect to LIAT. Instead, Government has come here, with the Opposition in the dark, and is going to ask the Opposition to cast support for a Guarantee, when we have no understanding nor knowledge of the true extent of the indebtedness of LIAT. Sir, Government needs to show what type of organisational structural deficits that might exist, which are preventing LIAT from becoming a solvent entity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is from that perspective that the Opposition holds the view that until there is evidence brought to this Honourable Chamber, to give us a clear indication as to LIAT's previous and present indebtedness and how any further support by this Administration would help LIAT, not only to deal with its past debts but to deal with LIAT's restructuring in such an effective way, so that it would become a viable entity...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is, therefore, my contention, as it was the contention of my Colleagues, not to give our

support to this Guarantee, unless we have the necessary financial data that we can peruse and discuss with our own techocrats, for us to come to a position as to whether or not we should continue to support LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think it is good enough simply to say that because LIAT plays a major role in the tourism sector in Barbados, in terms of the movement of CARICOM nationals, that we should continue to be throwing money behind the number of debts that LIAT would have accumulated. I do not think that is a wise position to take, and I do not believe that anyone who argues that, would have had an understanding of business and why businesses fail.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one could put as much money as one would want behind some businesses but if there is incompetent management or improper organisational structures, the businesses would not flourish. Therefore, the Opposition is saying that we want to see the evidence which supports that those organisational patterns and management elements are in place, to ensure that any support given by the people of Barbados would be utilised in the most effective way, to uplift LIAT.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is all the Opposition is asking, which I do not believe is an unreasonable position to take. That is why I will, therefore, support my Colleagues, in not giving any support to this Guarantee, at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make it overwhelmingly clear because it seems as though the Honourable Members on the Other Side are saying that Barbados has become the major shareholder, as though it was by accident. It was by a calculated and decisive move for Barbados to become the major shareholder. Therefore, we are saying that if a decision like this is to be taken, one simply cannot utilise the premise that because LIAT might move a significant number of tourists throughout CARICOM, that would be good enough reason for Barbados to become the major shareholder or a good enough reason for Barbadian taxpayers to be asked to guarantee the debt of this particular institution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again I side with my Colleagues and we opt not to give our support to this Guarantee.
1.50 p.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my Colleagues have been very clear and concise in indicating

why the Opposition will not be supporting this Resolution. I think it is high time that the Government comes to a Christian understanding that it will not be business as usual on This Side where we are going to support any guarantees for any public obligations in respect of entities for which there is either inadequate information, in this case no financial information at all and no strategic plan. We are not flying by faith and I want the Ministry of International Transport to understand that we are only prepared to fly by sight. If the lights on your landing strip are not on, if the other paraphernalia in relation to international transport policy is not functioning, we are not prepared to go into the air with you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister needs to understand that according to his Prime Minister, even though I have reason to understand that the Prime Minister himself believes it, we live in a new era of accountability. Sir, this Government passed a New Public Accounts Committee Act which gave the Public Accounts Committee the right to enquire into even intergovernmental entities like LIAT where the Government owned a certain percentage of the shareholdings. Yet the Minister comes to Parliament again and we are supposed to approve an unlimited guarantee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think that people understand what this is. This is not a \$1 million guarantee, it is not a \$2 million guarantee, we cannot even say that we have approved a \$60 million guarantee. There is nothing on the document presented by the Minister that indicates the size of the obligations that may eventually fall to the taxpayers of Barbados, yet the Minister brings us no financial information. We are supposed to go on what he said about the new CEO being appointed and that they are going to put in place new roots. Sir, we have heard all this about LIAT before. The only time there has been a dramatic improvement in the performance of LIAT is when they are faced with competition. When Caribbean Star came on the scene, all of a sudden efforts were made by the personnel at LIAT to improve their performance. When BWIA bought out BWIA Express, they hussled to try and improve and when the agency, Carib Express – in which so much taxpayers money was wasted and more money was blown...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You can get up on a Point of Order, if you want to, at least we will hear something from you. I do not mind sitting down if a Member, who does not normally intervene in matters, wants to get up on a Point of Order. I know the Honourable Member agrees with what the Opposition says and that is why he is not going to intervene particularly in relation to the airport and other aspects of the portfolio of the Ministry of International Transport of which

he is most familiar and probably has greater expertise than the current Minister but, Sir, we will not go into that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every time those entities were established, LIAT hussled to improve on their performance. Sir, we have had so many CEOs of LIAT in my time. There were new Boards, rationalisation, union negotiations, changes in staff, changes in routes. Sir, what the Minister is presenting is nothing new. I think it is a sad commentary on the current Ministry of International Transport that when I look at the Draft National Strategic Plan for Barbados that there is not a single reference to an international transport policy. The Minister might say that is not so because, I must tell you, Sir, that there is a photograph of an airplane on page 17 and another photograph of an airplane on page 71 and, to that extent, international transport gets covered by the National Strategic Plan. Sir, I know the Minister is into images. He is very good at marketing and images and he would tell us that the Opposition is misleading the House because there are some very large photographs of airplanes in the National Strategic Plan and that should give us enough food for thought in relation to international transport but, Sir, there is no reference to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the strategic plan which the Minister speaks about. If LIAT plays and is to play such a critical and vital role in relation to regional transport both in relation to Cricket World Cup and otherwise and if all the fancy talk we heard from the Honourable Member for St. James Central, who is speaking on a different plane altogether – no pun intended – but he was soaring to levels that barely brought him into contact with people working at the airport like your constituents and my constituents. Of course, you know that we are in here to defend their interest and that is why you and I would be most concerned about the Red Caps, their alienation and their treatment but, Sir, I will not deal with that now even though we have heard a great deal about it but we have not heard from the Minister on it as yet. I hope he has something to say because it is important to understand that at the end of the day, the little people have to bear the brunt of the repayment of any failed enterprises that have been guaranteed by the Government of Barbados. Sir, for every dollar that the Red Caps earn in the airport in Barbados, there is the potential that will be diminished, not only by making them pay for trolleys or giving them a contract that is so one-sided that they have no rights, it will be diminished to the extent that there could be liable by way of additional taxation or obligations at a future point in time to repay the unlimited obligations that the Minister of Tourism, without any financials presented to this Parliament, is asking us to support. Sir, I do not see why we should do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no problem in supporting a strategic plan for LIAT. I have no problem saying that Barbados would meet its obligations as a regional player but the Minister must give us information, that is what this

Parliament process is all about. It is about accountability and transparency, two words that flowed very eloquently from the mouth of the Honourable Member for St. James Central in 1999. I even have a video which I watch every now and then in which he speaks about the new levels of accountability and transparency but that does not stimulate him now.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, you do not stimulate me. I am talking about what stimulates you. What does not stimulate you is accountability. Sir, accuracy does not stimulate the Honourable Member for St. James Central anymore. Sir he spoke so much about people involvement but those things do not stimulate the Honourable Member for St. James Central anymore. This is why I said that he soared on a different level and a different plane because losing contact with the concerns of ordinary Barbadians about the arrogance and deceptiveness of this Government ...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I prefer deceptiveness because it is not as strong as deceit but that would not be parliamentary so I would not say deceit. Sir, the deceptiveness of information and the omission to present information to this Parliament in relation to matters of national concern. Sir, what the Minister is saying to the people of Barbados today is to sign a blank cheque for LIAT.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I hate to break the flow of the Honourable Member but to associate the Government with some measure of deception, deceptiveness or whatever, however he couches it, is unparliamentary and should be struck from the records. Sir, I do not think he should be allowed to get away with that. There is no such word as deceptiveness. The word is deception and it comes from deceit. I believe that it should be struck from the record.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, proceed.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I was making the point that what the Minister is essentially saying, is to sign a blank cheque for LIAT, to guarantee the open obligation. I have known the Minister of International Transport for many years, but he would never go to the bank and sign an open guarantee for me or any of his other long-standing friends.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South knows LIAT. He is saying to go and sign an open-ended guarantee, no fixed amount of money for an entity that has struggled financially, with no strategic plan presented to this Parliament, only the say-so of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South. His say-so has never been strong enough to convince us on This Side and it is not going to do so today, because we have already indicated that we will not be supporting the guarantee until the Minister – and I want other Ministers on That Side who are away and in the hearing of my voice, not to bring before this Chamber, any guarantees for support by the Opposition – unless accurate information has been presented, unless we can be guaranteed, that there is a way forward for the particular entity, that it is deserving of that level of financial support and comfort, and that at the end of the day, the taxpayers would not be called upon to underwrite unreasonable obligations. The Minister has not fulfilled any of those criteria other than, as I say, to come in here with the legal formalities, a Bill and a guarantee, and we are to act on his say-so alone.

Sir, the Honourable Member could say in six months time that at the point at which he was speaking the strategic plan has not yet been presented and he was not aware of certain things. He could say that he had not seen the financials for LIAT, because the Honourable Member has not yet said a word about the financial condition of LIAT, in this debate, of its ability to meet this obligation, whether there are any issues in relation to its operations, that may stop it from meeting these obligations. None of that has been said, yet this Parliament of Barbados, with intelligent people sitting in it on Both Sides of the House, is asked to rubberstamp obligations which the Minister of International Transport has obviously given an indication that he will support. I am saying that we are not going to do it, so do not count on the support of the Opposition in that regard, Sir.

I thank you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me begin by stating very clearly that we need to engage in this exercise today, even with all that have been said and debated previously, relative to LIAT and its vital importance to our future existence. We never thought it would have gone this far, particularly to raise issues that I consider initially, not to be relevant to the issue of LIAT and its functioning in relation to the guarantee under this piece of legislation.

Since this issue was raised, I intend to attend it. I want to begin by stating clearly that we are in agreement on This Side, on the matter of providing more information about

LIAT to this Honourable House, particularly to the Honourable Members on the Other Side of the aisle. I think that it is necessary that they have the relevant information. Therefore, I am committed to providing for them the most up-to-date financials on LIAT, as well as its strategic direction, couched in a business plan for the future. I am committed to doing that.

The other thing that I want to raise is how we look at LIAT and whether we continue to throw good money after bad. I am in total disagreement, with any concept that we are throwing good money after bad. As far as we are concerned, LIAT has a strategic role to play in the development of our civil aviation and international transport industry, more so in the development of our regional tourism industry, even more so particularly, in light of where we are going with the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Therefore, the binding and basic philosophy behind this is, do we give up and allow those fortunes to be controlled by entities, totally outside our financial, economic or social control, and give them wholesale to entities which have no relevance and stated commitment to this region. Do we just allow them to be thrown to the whims and fancies of people, whose navel strings are not buried in the Caribbean, or do we try in small measure to control our fortunes relative to the airline industry?

Sir, I say that this Administration is not going to be fanciful, or reckless in the way the Democratic Labour Party has been known to be, and to play with the fortunes of people of Barbados. We are supporting LIAT and we are supporting it because we believe that LIAT is essential. Sir, LIAT is fundamental to how we proceed in the future, in terms of our fortunes in Barbados. Therefore, we will be supporting it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a fundamental philosophical issue of airline transport in the region. I like to hear the talk about, whether you should put money into airlines. I say that in an environment, in which almost every airline across the world, particularly those from within a legacy model, are losing. People who have deeper pockets than us, people who, essentially, have much more resources than we have, are losing money daily in the airline industry. Those countries, particularly Air France, Lufthansa, SAS and all the Scandinavian countries continue to pump money into their airlines, even the United States of America, is guaranteeing private sector airlines, because they understand the essential role that air transport plays, in their overall socio-economic development.

Sir, are you telling me that a 2 by 3 airline like LIAT, that has no money, has always lost money, that we as a country, when LIAT is bringing half of the regional travel that comes into Barbados, that we should not put money in

it? What nonsense am I hearing? I am saying categorically that this Government is supporting LIAT because it is essential.

Sir, there is another issue, a wider and higher philosophical issue. The air transport experts across the globe are out on this issue of whether an airline forming a part of a bridge, is really essential for it to make money. Sir, let me draw an analogy. My car brings me to work. It is an expense. I spend money on it every day, gas, parts and repairs. It does not make any money, but I need it to support me professionally. I need to get around. This is the fundamental philosophical issue.

Sir, when you are dealing with an airline, the jury is still out, on whether you need to support that as a bridge. Fundamentally, you need to ensure that it does not continue to lose, or lose more than you can afford. At the end of day, like a bridge taking you from one place to another, you need to support it, that is the second reason why we believe that we should support this airline.

Sir, I want to move to another important issue and that is the reference to the National Strategic Plan and whether a strategic plan should have specifics on things like LIAT and air transport.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Members who spoke about the strategic plan and its reference not to international transport or to LIAT, specifically, do not have a 'flying' clue about what a strategic plan is. It is a strategic document. It is not a specific map. Let me explain.
2.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, strategic planning is a managerial process of developing and maintaining a viable fit between an organisation objectives and its resources and its changing market opportunities. This is the fundamental academic definition of what is a strategic plan. I could raise many issues on what you believe.

Sir, a strategic plan, gives you a broad vision or guideline of where you need to go, create a mission, you take your external and internal environments and analyse them, you then marry them. You see how the external and internal environment is changing over time, and you try to create a basic objective plan.

I can call a number of specific areas that I would like to see, included in a strategic plan but that is not what the document is about. Sir, falling out of that document now, you would get specific work plans, at a much more micro scale that would allow you to deal with things like international transport or the like.

The issue and the aim of a plan is to shape and reshape a company or organisation's business and its products, so that they continue to produce satisfactory profits and growth for the entity. But it is really an overall objective plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those who think that they can include in it, vendors, airlines and other people, do not have a clue about what the managerial process of strategic planning is about.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South is misleading the House. Either he has not read the Government's Draft Strategic Plan ... He may have his own definition of what strategic planning is, but he is not the Leader of Barbados, currently.

The current Strategic Plan sets out very clearly the sectoral activities and plans, Sir, manufacturing, tourism, trade, agriculture and it even almost follows the trajectory of the Division of Labour in the Cabinet. All we are saying, Sir, is that other than the two photographs of airplanes, there is no other reference to any plan, in relation to international transport. That is basically it. Sir, it is as simple as that, so I think the Honourable Member for St. Michael South is misleading the House.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to repeat my position. I am not saying that coming out of the work plans of the National Strategic Plan, you cannot then make reference under, say economic activity, issues related to international transport, as it relates to the bolstering of other economic sectors or whatever, and then you specify under their plans, but a broad draft Strategic Plan will not speak to those types of specifics that is the issue I am now putting to the House. Sir, it is relevant to going forward and to our economic activity, and economic development but not in a document of that kind but I move on.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. It is a glaring omission. One, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. I will give you an example. Sir, on page 177 of the draft plan, there are specific pledges, in relation to traffic management and local transportation, even the establishment of a bus rapid transit system, a public transport authority, and a park and ride system.

The Honourable Member is giving the impression that the National Strategic Plan is some esoteric, broad exercise. Maybe, that is his view of it. I cannot blame him because not many people would have a chance to really understand or buy into it. This plan has otherwise, in almost every other area of governance, set out specific things that would happen.

I am saying to you there is not even a section of the plan to deal with this so-called, important, vital and critical area of national development. It is negligence and incompetence on the part of the Minister, that it has not been included in this Strategic Plan.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I repeat. That level of specificity will come out. The Plan that he is holding says on top of it, draft. There have been a number of Town Hall Meetings held to deal with the document. He is creating now the issue that this is cast in concrete and it is finish. Do not bring that to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am putting it to you, that level of specificity can come out of the working plans of the document. Sir, airlines and vendors are all important but, again, out of that plan and what we have heard coming out of the Town Hall Meetings and the other responses and feedback, we can then go to other areas of specifics.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to address some of the references that were made to other aspects of the legislation, particularly, section 4.4. The section 4.4 and this, "no sovereign immunity" is put into these references under the guarantee for specific reason. Sir, this really seeks to create a basis... Once Government enters the commercial market and this is a commercial contract, it should not then claim that the guarantor cannot enforce against it, namely, the rights of sovereign immunity.

For example, once the people call back for their plane, you say that this is a sovereign state and you cannot send it back. That is what this is meant to deal with. Therefore, the mischief you are seeking to avoid with this whole issue of sovereign immunity is this, that people could come back to say at the end of the day that you have guaranteed this, but now you are claiming that you are sovereign Government and we cannot get back our plane and that is not you want. Therefore, do not tell me that you do not understand that. I am no lawyer but there are no lawyers on That Side either, to be able to explain it to anybody.

Sir, section 4.5 detects very simply that, after a country has entered into a commercial arrangement with a commercial entity, you do not want that country to come back and claim sovereign immunity over the actions that you seek to do. It is a simple matter. You do not have to be any scholar to figure out that.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are no lawyers over there to help any of you. There are lawyers over here and that is the point.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please address the Chair.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: I am not taking any advice from any would-be lawyer on the Other Side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in section 4.5, clearly the text is drafted in anticipation of receiving today's assent from Parliament and Parliamentary approval. Sir, regarding the issue of unaudited accounts, I raise the issue and I will bring the accounts but I want to make it clear, in the last year, since Barbados has entered into the mix with LIAT, LIAT has cut its losses in half, Sir, by 50 per cent.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the House the impression that now LIAT is doing better. The maintenance contractor is now making greater demands on the Government of Barbados, than on the official owners of LIAT, when they were doing worse.

The Honourable Member needs to explain that statement to this House because the Honourable Member is saying that now LIAT is doing better, they are now being requested by a third party to produce guarantees that they never had to guarantee before.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is disrespecting the Chair.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you withdraw that statement, please. The statement should be struck from the record of this House.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member were ordered to be struck from the record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.
2.20 p.m.

HON. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have said in here that LIAT is performing better than it has performed in the past. Honourable Members on the Other Side clearly demand that we produced financial statements to prove that point, I have no problem with that and they would be produced.

I want to speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker, more to the issue at the airport and to the Red Cap matter. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is this Government's stated intention that none of the Red Caps at the Grantley Adams International Airport will be disadvantaged by any action taken at that airport. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give you my word, that if there are baggage carts in the hall of the Grantley Adams International Airport,

which are not controlled by the Red Caps, they will be removed today.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that he is not aware that there are carts at the airport that are not being operated by the Red Caps. The first thing the Honourable Member would have to admit is that he is not aware that there are carts at the airport.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am making the point that if there are baggage carts in the Arrivals Hall at the airport which are not under the control of the Red Caps, there will be removed today. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give you my word on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, until such time as we resolve every matter related to the Red Caps...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House because he has no authority to give a statement like that to this House. The only person who can give that statement to this House is the Chairman of the Board.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are now speaking about a private company, just as we are speaking about the hospital. Sir, no Minister could come to this House and give that assurance because the Minister has given up his right to the Board.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I make the point, if there are carts in that Arrivals Hall which are not under the control of the Red Caps, they will be removed by midnight tonight.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member has not told this House that he has received permission from the Chairman of the Board to make such a statement.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I repeat that the carts will be removed today.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. This is a very serious matter. I know you said that we were not to talk about it, but you have allowed the Minister to talk about it, so I assume that he is operating under a different rule from the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. Sir, I want to make it abundantly clear...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have made a ruling and that should be final, but you seem to...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You are entitled to make the ruling, Sir. I do not agree with it, but you are entitled to make it. However, if you stop an Honourable Member on This Side from speaking about it, I am wondering how it is that you are allowing the Honourable Member on That Side to speak about it. I think that is grossly unfair, that is my view, Sir, but you are entitled to rule as you wish.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I would like to inform you that I gave the Honourable Member for St. Michael South a chance to just expand on what he was saying.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am rising on a point of order, but I do not want to run afoul of your ruling, so I am saying that in advance of what I am going to say, I am acknowledging that you ruled other persons out of order but that you have allowed the Honourable Member for St. Michael South to resume debate on it. Sir, I am only making sure that I am within the four corners of the debate as prescribed by you.

I am saying to you, Sir, that the Opposition was saying that the carts should have never been in there and therefore there should be nothing less than the immediate removal of them, not by midnight tonight. The Minister is a Minister of the Crown, he acts on the basis of authority of this Parliament and we are saying that if there is one thing we will support him on today and immediately, it will be the removal of those carts. We cannot support him on the other things he has done, but we will support him in relation to that one.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Enough said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that. They will be removed today if they are in there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other issue is of LIAT's finances. LIAT (1974) Limited is a public company registered in Antigua. Sir, there is no obligation under their laws, as I understand it, for them to bring to Parliament anything related to their finances. Sir, there is also a guarantee that is being made to the Parliament of Antigua relative to this reserve maintenance guarantee as well. Sir,

I just want to make that clear. Sir, the unaudited financial statements that speak to LIAT's financial performance and any strategic direction couched in a business plan or any other plan will be brought to this House so that Honourable Members can avail themselves of the direction that LIAT is going.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the last year, since we have been involved as a Government in this carrier, LIAT has shown substantial, on-time, financially sound performance, so LIAT is moving in the right direction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even if we incur losses in LIAT, the losses themselves cannot equate in any way to the relative overall economic benefit that we derive from that carrier being in the air, that is why we are involved in it. Philosophically, it is the state that we need to be in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to deal with this issue that the airline must always make money. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Air Jamaica loses money every day but Air Jamaica takes more tourists to Jamaica than any other airline that goes into Jamaica, therefore, what you have to be looking at is the net contribution of the airline to the overall economic...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because he is drawing unequal parallels. The operations of Air Jamaica are subject to review by the Parliament of Jamaica. I am also saying that the Government of Barbados passed an Act in this country on the 17th June, 2003 and it was passed in the Senate on 2nd July, 2003, which allows for the Public Accounts Committee of Barbados to inquire into the activities of an inter-governmental body such as LIAT where that body consents to it.

I am saying that this Parliament, because we are now the principal shareholder in LIAT, needs to be assured of the operations of that entity whether it makes a profit or not because nobody in here has said anything about profit yet.

The Honourable Member wants to make a point, build up a strong man and knock it down, but we want to know that this Parliament has the right and that the Minister will undertake and ensure it is gazetted that LIAT, because that is what the law said... I see some people 'skinning up their faces', but they are not familiar with the law as it is now.

Sir, section 7 of the Act says that where the parties to an agreement relating to the establishment of an inter-governmental body consent to the examination by the committee of the financial affairs of that body, the Minister shall notify the fact that they so consented in the Gazette and the body shall therefore become an inter-governmental body to which this Act applies.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister has said he would make the accounts available but that is not enough. They must be available and must be subject to a review and analysis by a Parliament. Therefore, if they are not subject to the Parliament of Antigua, then the operations and financials of LIAT should be subject to the review of the Parliament of Barbados, since Barbados is the principal shareholder in the entity.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed Honourable Member.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think that was a point of order, neither does the analogy work. Sir, the issue is not the review. The issue is the philosophical construct and concept about whether or not the overall net value to your economy is more than just the issue of the initial dollars and cents that were first put into it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in relation to the review process, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and therefore, needs to call a meeting. The Honourable Member should stop limping about at every 'dub fete' and do some work. The Honourable Member should call a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee and let us deal with the matter.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is again misleading this Honourable House because...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I could be anywhere. That is my right and privilege. I do not break the law. I do not kidnap anybody. I do not commit any crimes and therefore I am entitled... I am an upstanding citizen of Barbados. The police are to deal with those things, not me.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please address the Chair. Honourable Member, what is your point of order?

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You all like to trouble people, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reasons.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are on a point of order. If you cannot speak on a point of order, let somebody else continue.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am on a point of order. Are you hearing me, Sir. You do not have to hear me, if you do not want to.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, go on.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Well, thank you. I am speaking my time. If I am speaking too slowly, you can say so. It does not mean I would talk any faster.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You were saying something that is totally irrelevant.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I can speak as slowly as I want to in any debate in this Honourable House or otherwise. That is my privilege and my right, as an Honourable Member of this Parliament.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I thank you, Sir. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South got up in this Honourable Chamber and gave the impression that the reason the Public Accounts Committee has not been meeting is because of the Leader of the Opposition, when, in fact, it is Government's failure to produce regulations that would give effect to the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

Sir, the previous Leader of the Opposition had written to the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and asked for those regulations to be drafted because in an attempt to investigate in the activities of the Urban Development Commission, the Public Accounts Committee's activities had to be shut down because there were no regulations in place.

It is, therefore, in the hands of the Government and His Excellency the Governor-General, is the person responsible for dealing with the regulations, to have those regulations drafted. It is part of the provisions of the legislation.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thought the point of order of the Honourable Member would have been that he does not go to dub fetes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I close by saying that I guarantee that I will bring to this Honourable House all of the financials related to LIAT and any strategic direction or otherwise, in which LIAT is going.

I do submit to this Honourable House and to the country that our investment in LIAT is sound at this time and that our monies are very well guarded and protected in this particular investment. I also submit that what we need to be focusing on more, is the net benefit that LIAT would be bringing to the economy of Barbados and not just looking at the initial investment that we are making in this carrier.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that when we increased our shareholding in LIAT, it created much debate but I think that we have more than justified our investment by the way in which LIAT is going.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I ask that this Bill be read a second time.

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

A division was called for, and the Bell was rung.

AYES – 10
Hon. Dame Billie Miller, Hon. R. R. Farley
Hon. G. A. Clarke, Hon. K. D. Symmonds,
Hon. N. A. Lynch, Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson,
Hon. Miss C. Y. Forde, Hon. Rev. J. J. S. Atherley,
Mr. L. R. Tull, Mr. H. F. Lashley.

NOES – 6
Mr. D. J. H. Thompson, Mr. R. D. Jones,
Mr. R. L. Sealy, Mr. M. A. Lashley,
Mr. D. St. E. Kellman, and Dr. D. C. Estwick.

Asides.
2.40 p.m.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to propose that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North be appointed temporary Chairman of Committees.

On the separate motions of Hon. N. A. LYNCH, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL: This House is in Committee.

Clause 1 was called and passed.

Clause 2 was called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. N A. LYNCH, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee without amendment and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. N. A. LYNCH, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the LIAT (1974) Limited Guarantee (Amendment) Act, 2006.

ORDER NO. 15 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE OF THE GOVERNMENT, IN FAVOUR OF BOMBARDIER SERVICES CORPORATION OF THE PERFORMANCE BY LIAT (1974) LIMITED OF AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE, RETURN CONDITION OBLIGATIONS AND RE-POSSESSION CONTAINING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS AS SET OUT IN THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have more than debated this and know what this aircraft maintenance, return condition obligations and repossession is about.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

ORDER NO. 17 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PAYMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL SUM OF TWENTY-TWO MILLION DOLLARS AND INTEREST THEREON IN RESPECT OF A BOND ISSUE TO THE TRANSPORT TO RBTT MERCHANT BANK LIMITED

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the matter for consideration by this House is the approval of a Resolution to guarantee the sum of \$22 million Barbados financing facility from RBTT Merchant Bank Limited in the Barbados Transport Board in order to facilitate the purchase of 70 buses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the buses are being purchased from Simpson Motors Limited and are to be placed on

service units in the bus fleet and to facilitate an expansion in the current fleet in order that the Transport Board can deliver bus service on an enhanced network of routes. Sir, currently the Transport Board has an active fleet of about 240 buses comprising 100 units which were first purchased in 1997, 110 units acquired in year 2000 and 30 acquired in the year 2004.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Board has only been able to put an average of 140 buses in active service on a daily basis. However, the daily peak vehicle requirements which is term PVR has been determined to be in the region of 250 buses on average. Sir, the terms and conditions of the BDS\$22 million facility are as follows:

The facility is a fixed rate non-callible bond. The tenure is for 10 years and the interest rate is not to exceed 7.2 per cent per annum. There will be a moratorium of principal payment for the first year, thereafter, the principal will be liquidated by 18 equal semi-annual principal payments until maturity. The Guarantee is to be facilitated under the Transport Board Act, Cap 297.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to outline to the House that the Board currently services 98 routes, excluding the school routes and 12 short routes around the urban area. The Board has also embarked on two programmes aimed at improving bus availability so far. There are the Special Works Programme where they are repairing 60 buses and a Bus Refurbishment Programme where 100 units are being repaired. Sir, those two special programmes have allowed bus availability of an average of 120 to 160 buses in any one day. Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the availability of buses would not be enough to frequently service the entire island. This is one of the reasons why it is important for us to purchase these buses at this time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Board also implemented a number of other measures to improve operation efficiency and effectiveness through improved service delivery, the capture of some of the short routes, increased advertising and increased charter services. These things are being done at this time in order to improve the revenue status of the Transport Board.
2.50 p.m.

Sir, some expenditure measures and cost-contained measures, include the installation of an electronic ticketing system, a machine or fare box, and the computerisation of the cash-handling operations. These are measures which are being used in order to cut down on some of the costs incurred by the Transport Board. Sir, we are also installing a number of speed limiters on the buses. We are hopeful that this would assist in reducing the rate of accidents and the high cost of repairs that we currently incur at the Transport Board.

As a consequence, we acquired seventy units, made up of sixty-five large Mercedes Benz buses and five wheelchair buses, for the disabled. With the acquisition of these seventy buses, we are looking at an active fleet of 310 buses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new buses will be delivered to Barbados around December 2006. These units would help us to improve service delivery, to routes around the country at this time. It is important for us to note, that there are times when the Transport Board cannot service adequately and effectively a bus route. Sir, with the additional seventy buses, we are hoping that we could put a programme in place, to service the country in an adequate and efficient way.

Sir, we also want to return to some of the short-haul routes, like the Pine, Grazettes, improve the City Circle bus system, as well as the bypass bus service, from Oistins to Speightstown. We are also hoping to improve our charter business. The charter business has been very profitable. In fact, I understand that it earns approximately \$3 million annually. We are hoping to improve this business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also hoping to increase sales and to improve the school bus system. It is important for us at this point in our history to implement an efficient school bus service but we will not be able to do so, unless we have adequate buses.

Sir, when we purchase the seventy buses, these additional buses should improve the school bus service. A special unit will be established at the Transport Board, for servicing the school bus system. At present I do not like the way it is being handled. It is too *ad hoc*. There will be a new system to regulate the school bus system. During school holidays, these buses can be used for charter and to help the various sporting organisations.

Sir, a scheduling software package will be acquired to assist with the rostering of duties, not only for buses but for personnel of the Transport Board. A study is currently being carried out and we would, hopefully, be able to provide better security in the bus terminal.

I believe that it is fair to say, that the bus terminals at Weymouth, Fairchild Street, Princess Alice and Speightstown, are too open. We are implementing a security package to ensure that when persons travel on buses or visit the terminals, they are as safe and as secure as much as we can guarantee.

It is important to note that the Transport Board currently employs over 692 persons and the training of staff is important. We will continue to upgraded training for staff

in an effort to improve the delivery of service by the Transport Board in the future. Sir, our aim is to provide a better delivery service across the country.

I also want to make the point that we are hoping to upgrade the Weymouth Headquarters. In the past fifteen years, whether under this Administration or the other Administration, there have been plans of relocating the headquarters of the Transport Board. I believe that we have now secured additional parcels of land, from the Ministry of Housing and Lands. We are hoping to set up permanent headquarters, at the Weymouth site.

As I said, in the past it was rumoured that they were going to Silver Hill, Welches and all over the place. I believe that we could safely set up the headquarters at Weymouth terminal. It is important for us to do so, because the buildings, scattered all over the place, are not in the best condition. There is definitely a need for new headquarters at the Weymouth site. During the coming year, we will be looking to upgrade the facilities for the workers, as well as to provide better facilities for the maintenance of the new buses.

It is also important to note, that with the 70 additional buses, it would be difficult for us to housed 310 active buses at the Weymouth site. Some of these buses will be housed at the Weymouth, Speightstown and Mangrove sites. I believe that in the future there will be an improved computerised bus service as we try to computerise it. We are also trying to put in place, in the next few months, a transfer system, where a person will be able to transfer on either the inward or outward route. For example, if a person is travelling from Sargeant Street, St. John to Bridgetown but wanted to reach Speightstown, that person could make use of the transfer system. We are currently looking at that system.

We are also looking at the system along the ABC Highway as well, where persons would not have to go to Bridgetown to conduct their business. Currently, if you are travelling from the country to Bridgetown, with the intention of travelling to Speightstown or another part of Barbados, your route must be through Bridgetown, before you could reach your destination.

Sir, we believe that a bus service from Top Rock, Christ Church, travelling along the ABC Highway, would allow commuters to be able to get to certain important areas in the country without going to town. That system is currently under review.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also note that a study has been undertaken for the school bus system. I have already met with a number of Principals of secondary schools, and we are hoping to implement a proper school system. This could

only be done, when we have the additional buses, even though we announced previously, that the system should commence by September 2006. I believe that we would have to delay the implementation of this system until the new buses arrive, at the end of December 2006.

Sir, with those remarks, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, it is important that the Transport Board provides the delivery of service to Barbados. One has to recognise the importance of this service, to the productivity of the country. I have always argued that the Transport Board is one of the social services, that we have to keep in Barbados and we have to ensure that it functions effectively.
3.00 p.m.

I honestly believe that an issue like this should have been dealt with when we dealt with the Estimates a couple months ago, and we should not be before Parliament now seeking to deal with an issue like this. Sir, everybody in Barbados knows that the number of buses that are currently run by the Transport Board are inadequate. Everybody knows that they are losing money. There is no reason, after preparing Estimates that we should be here seeking to finance the Transport Board when we knew, prior to the preparation of the Estimates that this requirement is needed.

Sir, this particular action is not needed, better could have been served, and if we had done this months ago. I am also making the point that the Transport Board as it stands right now is operating at 56 per cent of its capacity, in terms of vehicles.

Sir, what is even more striking is that the Transport Board, even though operating at 56 per cent of its capacity, has a situation where, whenever the tourism sector needs buses, the Transport Board, instead of following its obligation that the taxpayers of this country pay for, send the buses to the tourism sector, instead of sending them for the productive sector of this country. Sir, it is wrong.

This is one of the reasons and I will argue on that particular point... Whenever you frustrate workers and you threaten workers' jobs, and that is what occurred, Sir, whenever they turned up in the bus stand in the morning or evening and they do not find the buses, then they are forced

to buy cars. This means that if one does a careful analysis, one would understand that the problem facing the Transport Board is the lack of proper planning.

Sir, they have enough ZM buses, BT buses and taxis to adequately service the tourism industry and there is no need for the Transport Board to be competing with the private sector in the tourism industry, when that industry is too well-served, according to the critics.

Sir, because the Transport Board is supposed to be servicing the buses for people in this country, we decide to take the buses, ignore the productive sectors and the productive people, and send the buses to the tourism industry. Sir, that decision has caused the Transport Board to be in a worse position than it should have been in, Sir.

If the Transport Board members are serious about their mandate, and if the Government is serious about their mandate, the first thing they would do, is to stop the charters and stop depriving the workers of Barbados for having the Transport Board as a means of transport.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, this has nothing to do with increased capacity of disposable income. That is why the Government could come here and brag that since 1994, they have been able to double the numbers of vehicles on the road. Do you know why? Job security. People had to give up buying a piece of land and building a house, to protect their jobs, by buying reconditioned cars, so that they could get to work, because they could not rely on the Transport Board, and it hurts.

Sir, I represent a constituency where we would have been taught that when you go to school the first thing you try to get is a piece of land, then a house and then a car. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1995, L1234 was the number. By 2006, I am seeing vehicles mark L2612 and higher. What has happened is that my constituents, and I hope that the former Minister who used to sit in this place would now listen to this argument, who challenged me on this particular issue, that in less than 11 years, the number of cars in St. Lucy has doubled.

Since 1994, I have not seen 100 house spots in St. Lucy, but I have seen more than 1 400 new cars. I have not seen the same thing in relation to houses in St. Lucy. But you know what? Sir, my constituents who have been properly trained by their parents have now been disobeying their parents and now buying cars, instead of houses and land because they have to protect their jobs.

Sir, this is a very serious charge because you cannot live in a car. My constituents, who knew the importance of owning a piece of land, cannot now get the piece of land but they can get a reconditioned car, all because of bad transport policy in this country. I am saying, Sir, that if this Government understands the importance of transportation to work, they would reverse that trend and any new Democratic Labour Party Government would help to reverse the trend.

Sir, everybody knows that a house appreciates in value, if it is the right house, that land appreciates in value, but a car depreciates. The people of St. Lucy are not happy to buy an asset that is going to depreciate. If better could have been served, they would continue to listen to their parents and buy the asset that would appreciate. We, as a Government would have to change these things.

Sir, it is not fair to the masses of people in Barbados to be, as they would say, 'spending money and the money going up in smoke', because that is exactly what occurs when you buy a vehicle. When you buy a piece of land or a house, you get an appreciation. It appreciates in value.

Hear what I am saying, Sir. It is regrettable that somebody believes that they should have two cars and a house and a property but the first right of another citizen should be a car. Sir, we force our people to buy cars, and allow outsiders to buy land.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Somebody asked me how many cars I have. Ask me how much land I have. I have more land than cars. Sir, because I have land, it does not mean that I should believe I am the only person to have land. Sir, poor people have a right to have land and that is why I am arguing in that particular way, because you could do without the car, but you cannot do without the land.

Sir, I am saying that it is because of the bad transport system in this country, my brothers and sisters are now forced to see a car as a piece of land and a house. It is now getting so regrettable that some of them are forced to buy the car, they cannot get the land and some of them now have to resort to living in the car.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Please, you do not know that is happening? I am sorry.

As I was saying, Sir, ...

Do you want to buy some? I will sell you some. You said that I stole all, so why you want to buy some, and still borrowing to buy some.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please address the Chair.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, I was just negotiating a little deal to sell the Honourable Member for St. James Central a piece of beach front property. As you know, they are very famous to say that I sold land on the west coast in St. James, when I never owned a piece of land there.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you organising a deal? Then, you go outside and organise the deal.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We will speak in private corners. If you want a piece, I can negotiate that for you, do not mind that I sold all.

Sir, the point is that I am here to deal with the people's business. The people's business, as it stands now, is that every evening or every morning, the commuters, whether they are from Christ Church or St. Lucy, have to be struggling to find transport and when their jobs are threatened they have to find a car. Sir, I would not reflect on what we said last week, but sometimes they buy the car and then they cannot find the money to pay for the insurance. What we need is to find a proper Transport Board bus system so that the citizens of Barbados could believe that they could get up on mornings, go to the bus stop and get a bus.
3.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in rural Barbados, in a place like St. Lucy, if you see the 6 o'clock bus, you are not going to see the 7 o'clock bus, and if you see the 7 o'clock bus, you are not going to see the 8 o'clock bus. I am saying that it is not fair for those hardworking people in St. Lucy to have to compete among themselves for a transport system that is not working in their interest.

Sir, whenever we come to this House, the people from the North helps to provide the money to subsidise the Transport Board. Sir, if the people from the North are subsidising and others are getting, then they need to put in some more so that the people of St. Lucy could get too, they deserve better, and that is why I am here to represent their case.

Sir, I am not going to be selfish. I am saying that rural Barbados and all the others who are suffering at the hands of the Transport Board deserve better. Sir, that is why I do not have a problem with the subsidy when it comes to the Transport Board because you cannot have free secondary education and not add transport to it.

Sir, these are the things that I have no problem in supporting. Sir, if you ask me if I support LIAT, the answer

is yes, I support LIAT too. However, at the same time, I have to understand that I have to build a base which has to be the Transport Board. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should not be in here arguing today after we have guaranteed this \$22 million that the Transport Board will still be short. Sir, I am saying that if the \$22 million is inadequate then let us change the Resolution. Sir, we need to know what is required for the Transport Board so that the workers of Barbados can get to work without hindrance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we came in here on many occasions guaranteeing money for other entities that will not increase the productivity of the country. Sir, the workers of Barbados are the missing link. If the workers of Barbados are not treated fairly and the stress, which is inflicted on them on a daily basis because of Government policies, *et cetera*, is not removed, the productive sectors of this country will not function effectively and stress will remain within the economy.

Sir, if you remove the stress from the workers, the productive sectors will produce much better and then we can think of moving from an 8-hour day to a 24-hour day. Sir, it does not make any sense having a situation where the workers are stressed for eight hours and then you want to increase the number of hours available to work. Sir, they first have to correct the base problem.

Sir, the biggest problem facing Barbados today is its transport system which is also impacting upon the capacity for the economy to generate the necessary foreign exchange to make us happy people in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am told about the damage done by the commuters to the Transport Board buses, that might be true, but the damage done by the commuters cannot be as great as the damage done by the bad roads in the country. That is why I am calling on the Minister of Finance to give the Minister of Public Works and Transport the necessary money to repair the roads in Barbados so that the maintenance cost at the Transport Board will not be so high.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: The Honourable Member for St. James Central is telling me that the roads in Barbados have no impact on the Transport Board buses, and that is a lame duck excuse. Sir, I know that the Minister of Public Works and Transport would not make that statement because the Honourable Member knows better. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport needs some more money to repair the roads on which the buses travel. It is true that the Honourable Member represents the constituency of St. James Central where all rich people live and they do not have any bad roads so much so that in that particular

constituency they even have tiles on the road, so the Honourable Member would not understand what are bad roads. It is only the people in rural Barbados, like the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, that do not live with the type of luxury, who would appreciate this particular point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, outside of St. Lucy, only the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, and probably the Honourable Members for St. John and St. Philip North could probably hold my hand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point I am making is that if we are serious about increasing the life of the Transport Board buses, one of the first things we have to do is to ensure that we repair the roads of Barbados so that we could have the buses without those broken axles and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing is that Government cannot complain about the amount of money that they are subsidising the Transport Board with because when one looks at the fuel bill of the Transport Board, which belongs to Government anyhow, and one were to take off all of the charges from Government, one would be shocked to see how the fuel bill at the Transport Board will be reduced.

Sir, I am saying that the cost of fuel at the Transport Board has been over-inflated because of Government policy. If we want to truly understand the true subsidy for the Transport Board, then it should have duty-free concessions where things like the excise tax is removed so that the charges would not be inflated, and we would then know the true subsidy. It does not make sense for the Government to take from the Transport Board with one hand and to give back with the other. I am saying that it is because of things like these that the Transport Board is in this particular position.

Sir, I hope that when the Honourable Member speaks again that he would admit that this guarantee is not the amount that is necessarily required to put the Transport Board in a functioning position to service the whole of Barbados, because after we get these buses rural Barbados, including St. John, St. Lucy and all those outlying districts and parishes will still be crying out for lack of services. Sir, it does not make sense for us to know what we need to solve the problem and come in here and adopt a piecemeal approach to the particular problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, any Government that understands the meaning of social transformation would adopt the holistic policy pronounced by the Opposition and deal with it because they would understand how it would impact on the productive forces in this country. Sir, if we need, as I said before, to increase from an 8-hour day to a 24-hour day, then

we have to take other things into consideration, and the key thing is the worker.

Sir, the first question that has to be asked is how are we going to satisfy the transport needs of the worker when we make that necessary shift. Sir, if we cannot appreciate that point it is a waste of time shifting from an 8-hour day to a 24-hour day because you would be impeding the workers of Barbados and you would also be creating another problem.

Sir, when you shift from an 8-hour day to a 24-hour day, then the demands on the Transport Board are going to be greater and if you do not satisfy the demands of the Transport Board, then more persons will be forced to buy cars. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question we must ask is, do we want to see a Barbados with everybody owning a vehicle or do we want to see a Barbados with a proper transport system and people having house lots and houses.
3.20 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people's disposable incomes would only match the purchase of one item and therefore the car would have become the more important of the two, which would allow persons to keep their jobs. Therefore, seeing that the car would be the more important of the two, in order for persons to keep their jobs, everybody would tend to buy the car because they believe that since they have a job, that some time in the future they might be able to get a piece of land, if it becomes available.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that even though I support this Guarantee to support the Transport Board, that it is insufficient and does not serve the useful purpose, to which it should be serving. I would also say that we need to understand that the problems facing the Transport Board might appear to be minor to Government but that they are major problems because of the fact that they are impacting upon the lives of the people of Barbados. Sir, I know this Government does not understand what I am talking about but at least This Side and the people of Barbados understand what I am talking about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must be more caring towards the masses of people in Barbados because of the fact that too many of our people have to depend on the Transport Board. In this regard, the masses are subsidising the Transport Board and in return, are not getting the service they expect.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another concern is that Government cannot be coming to Parliament and guaranteeing money for the Transport Board, without recognising that the minibuses and the ZRs are all part of the transport system and are serving the same purpose as that of the Transport Board. Therefore, it is not fair for Government

to come Parliament, to provide money for the Transport Board, in circumstances where the Transport Board can have proper bus terminals, while the masses of people, who travel by ZRs and minibuses, must be put into other areas, which, when the rain falls, become very muddy. Sir, these areas look as though there had pigs running around there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Opposition is demanding better facilities for the ZRs and minibuses and therefore this Democratic Labour Party, which is not recognised in this Parliament but which is recognised throughout the country, has to bring policies to correct those things that are being done by this Government, as we do not expect them to be done by the Other Side, when one considers the amount of revenue this Government would have had since 1994 but would have not corrected any of those things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if Government has not done it in the last 12 years, it would be impossible for them to do it now in the last two years of their remaining life. Therefore, the Democratic Labour Party, as a Party, would have to correct those misdemeanours and would ensure that the masses of people in Barbados would be able to achieve what they need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to waste any more of this Honourable House's time. I hope the point has been made to Government and that they have understood that point. Sir, the point made was that the Transport Board is in need but that this \$22 million in Guarantee is inadequate, and that we need to get more money for the Transport Board. We need to ensure that the operators and owners of the ZRs and minibuses must have better facilities in which to operate. They are also Barbadians and they are doing a service for Government. Therefore, Government should recognise their contribution to the transportation system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want to say that sometimes those ZRs and minibus workers might do a number of foolish things but if we had to do a calculation based on productivity, it would show that these are the most productive workers in Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am not saying that the PSV's workers do not do foolishness; they do, but at the same time, it would be folly for me not to admit that based on production, they are the most productive workers in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that the ZRs and minibus operators need to clean up their act but at the same time, they need to be recognised for their productivity. Sir, the day that we could get Barbadians, as a whole, to

produce at the rate at which those ZRs and minibus operators operate, we would see that Barbados would be one of the most productive countries in the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we see an important statistic we should not ignore it. In a country, where we claim that people do not produce, when we see a group of people who are producing, we must acknowledge it. Furthermore, though we must acknowledge it, if they are doing wrong, we must also tell them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I am here saying to them today that they have a number of positive values but that they must never allow the negatives to overrun those positives. In addition, in a country that is crying out about productivity, when one looks, the PSV's workers are some of the most productive workers in the world but it would seem to me that sometimes they do not know it.

Sir, I would want to assure these persons that there are people who have recognised their productivity but I would want them to build on those positives and to continue adding to those positive values. Sir, at the same time, a caring Government must recognise and must appreciate the positives that they are doing for the transportation system, and not only the negatives. Government, therefore, must try to remove the negative values, impart the positives, and add to those positives that have been delivered by those persons.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may make a very brief intervention, and I begin where the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has left off. The Honourable Member has continued, and I suppose people are tempted to do this, to make reference to the lack of care demonstrated by the Government. When people could do this, one therefore, asks the question: "From under what rock have people crawled."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the education system, the health care system, housing, school meals, and the same transportation sector we are debating today, continue to be heavily subsidised by this Government. Sir, I want to be very specific about this because we are talking about a Transport Board in Barbados, which, for many years, has maintained fixed cost per passenger. In fact, it has not changed since I was at school. Therefore, the reality is that against an environment of rising oil prices, rising diesel prices, rising maintenance costs, rising cost of rolling stock, and rising cost of labour, where we have done capital works at Fairchild Street, at Speightstown and at Mangrove...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point is that one has, at some stage, to be reasonable, and I think that any reasonable person would want to offer kudos to a Government, which has been able to defend and maintain the transportation cost per passenger in Barbados, in the way in which this Government has been able to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, equally, I do not think that this debate is well-served, if it is only treated as a forum for complaining. Sir, this Government was the Government that has fought valiantly and successfully to get at least 200 square miles of nautical marine space, which offers us substantial energy potential, in the non-living resources of the sea.

Asides.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, characteristically for him now, you would hear the Honourable Leader of the Opposition asking what has that got to do with the debate.

Sir, the Honourable Member, not having any forward vision on the understanding that once we are able to source natural gas, in a way we could not have done before, this Government has laid a foundation for us to be the Government and the country which is introducing an opportunity for the Transport Board and all other PSVs, for that matter, to be operating off of natural gas, as opposed to continue building up expenses on the public purse, for having to operate off diesel, which would be imported into the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, therefore, I want to place the few remarks I would make into that context because it is not just an issue about beating up on the Crown and saying, if only. Equally, there has to be an opportunity taken, now that we have 70 new buses on the way, for us to look at some of the deficiencies in the system and for us to speak seriously and sensibly to how we could cure these defects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe there is much truth in the comments from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, when he talked about the difficulties or uncertainties of the service on long-haul routes. Sir, my own experience in my constituency, let us take, for example, the District "D" bus, which travels to St. Thomas but has to service the Sea View area. This service is highly irregular. I think that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would agree that perhaps it is one of the worst services into rural Barbados. Sir, persons cannot rely on it by day, nor by night. In addition, there are large sections of the population in my constituency and in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, who are substantially and seriously affected by it. That has to be corrected.
3.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now that we have 70 new buses on the way, we need to be prepared to speak to curing some of the defects which could continue to separate people in Barbados from their opportunities to earn a living in this country. Sir, I speak specifically to the problem which we have on the West Coast. It is a painful situation where on the West Coast of Barbados, people who have to service that monolithic hotel and restaurant industry which we have. They do not only come from the West Coast because many of them wind their way down from Thorpes, from Holders Hill, from Hoytes Village, districts like Haynesville, *et cetera*. The reality is that you are talking about a situation where some people have to take two buses to come from a distance of three miles or the alternative is to walk the distance. Sir, that defect can and should be corrected by proper rethinking of the routes. I have written to the management of the Transport Board repeatedly on these issues and they come back and tell me that the problem is rolling stock. If that is the problem, I am one of the happiest people in Barbados today to see that the problem can be sensibly and seriously corrected and challenged now that you are going to have as many as 70 new buses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, equally, I think that we have to understand that these things impact on our ability to create meaningful linkages between transportation and commerce.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke about the 24-hour working day. I compliment him because in many ways, he is more progressive in his thoughts than some persons charged with the responsibility for labour at the union level. Sir, I am one of those persons who will unswervingly and unapologetically take the position that we have to move toward the 24-hour working day but I agree that transportation is a key issue. Sir, already in my constituency, there is Kentucky Fried Chicken, which is run 24-hours and also Chefette where people have to find their way home at 12 o'clock and do so, many times, of their own volition by organising a lift. Sir, especially the female who has to find her way home in an environment where, increasingly, she is working later and later and throughout the night. There are restaurants in Warrens and on the South Coast which are 24-hours restaurants and we have to have a transport system which service these people 24 hours a day. I have no difficulty with that whatsoever.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that Barbados has to understand that home drums beat first. Sir, a lot of people do not know that civil aviation regulations require that persons who are working in the tower at Grantley Adams International Airport be given transportation to and from work if they work late at night. I have no difficulty with that because I understand the sense behind it but I have a grave difficulty if you tell me that the single mother who has little or no choice, has few employment options at her issue, then has to comprise to the extent of choosing not to work

because of the fact that something as fundamental as easy transportation to and from the place of work is not available.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have written to the union about this matter and again, one of the concerns that we have had to confront is the reality that the union has taken the position that you cannot tell an employer to provide a service home. Sir, these are opportunities for this difficulty to be corrected. Sir, I have no difficulty in saying that I welcome this development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the 70 new buses must also include, to some extent, a facility where we are able to treat better to our disabled community. I am hearing that already there are some buses which do so and I want to see more of it happening in Barbados. Sir, it is not a matter of courtesy but a matter of necessity because you cannot have a service-oriented economy where a substantial sector of your society is in somewhere impaired from accessing transportation. This is a serious thing as we move along the path towards development. I think the Honourable Member for St. George North is aware of my feeling on this. He is also aware of the feeling of the Ministry of Social Transformation on this and, indeed, those of his predecessor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that I have difficulty with part of the operation of the Transport Board in the context of the arbitrariness of the way in which they treat some rural districts in Barbados especially with scheduling and changes in services arrangements. Sir, I will be very specific.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are in my constituency and that of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, a few areas where, depending on the day and the mood of the driver, the point at which the service would terminate would change. Sir, on the whim and fancy of a particular driver, he will either stop the bus at the bottom of the hill in Redman Village and, heaven help all those folks at the top who waiting, or alternatively he will go all the way to the top and turn around. Sir, that happens every day irrespective of rainfall or otherwise and it cannot be right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has to be, in the provision of a public good, certainty and an understanding between those who are receiving the good and those providing the good that it would be done on certain conditions. Sir, I believe that unless the management of the Transport Board plays a greater supervisory role and stops persons arbitrarily controlling this thing in the bus stand, other terminals and so on and to get on top of the situation in the interest of protecting the consumer and the traveling public in Barbados, then we will have a serious difficulty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not say so on behalf of the visitors who have to deal with it but on behalf of the Barbadians who are expecting us to govern and to govern well.

Sir, with those few remarks, I offer my support to the Resolution.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too wish to offer a few words on this matter, the bond issue for the purpose of raising BDS\$22 million for the Transport Board. Sir, the Transport Board has been running some large losses for quite a while in the \$25 million range. In fact, in 2005, it was a record of nearly BDS\$30 million in losses. It is only obvious when we talk about increasing the debt for the purposes of buying new buses that we have to look at the overall viability of the Barbados Transport Board. Sir, when I say viability, I do not necessary mean profitability because I think you would recognise that public transportation is a social service, that we are not looking to make a profit but obviously, we want it to operate in as viable a manner as it can. I do not think that we should be shame about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is quite right that many of the mass transit authorities in North America actually operate at losses, which is understood but they too recognise that it is a social service which one must provide and you accept that you may not make profits. Sir, having said that, I do think that there needs to be adequate management and there is ample evidence to suggest that there are a number of things that the Transport Board can do immediately to improve its management. I was not aware that things were as bad as the Honourable Member for St. James Central just told us; arbitrarily decisions being made with respect to suspending routes and terminating routes early or late. Sir, that is not good enough but it is something that could be dealt with immediately by management and if it is that persons need to be discipline then it should happen but that is simply not good enough.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt in mind that if we could have the appropriate framework, where we can improve the reliability and efficiency of the service, more people would, in fact, use the Transport Board. Sir, persons who own vehicles will leave them parked and would get on a bus of Transport Board but...

3.40 p.m.

Sir, persons who own vehicles would leave them parked and get on a Barbados Transport Board bus, but it must be a reliable service. It has to be reliable, efficient and comfortable. Obviously, the time that you take waiting for a bus would have to be factored in, but persons would do it.

Sir, when we go to the North Atlantic countries, very often, in those public transportation systems, the high-powered stock broker is sitting next to a janitor in the same public transportation system. Sir, if there is a properly functioning transportation system people would use it.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: I would think that there are some immediate things that we need to do to make it viable, and to reduce the cost of maintenance. I notice that is one of the major cost items in the report. Sir, expenses are over \$60 million and the revenue principally from bus fare is about \$30 million. There is a serious operating deficit that the Board is beset with, therefore, they need to improve their maintenance operations.

Sir, on that score as well, perhaps, the Government should revisit the idea of the subsidy, perhaps in the short-run, just to get the Transport Board viable. If we accept that it is a social service, what is the point in coming and guaranteeing debt for an organisation, that is losing close to \$30 million, knowing that you have to come back either with a Supplementary or to guarantee a further facility down the road.

Maybe, I think the question of Government's approach towards the Transport Board needs to be reviewed. Let me also add that it should be done within the context of the Public Transport Authority that has been promised, I think, by 2007, I sincerely hope it would become a reality.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that even though we want to see the Transport Board viable, and not necessarily profitable, I do not believe that the answer is to choke the private operators out of the short-haul routes, simply to make money. I believe that privately owned public service vehicles have a role to play in our transportation system. They provide a very good service. Sir, there are some vagabonds among them, but there are vagabonds in all sorts of activities.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Therefore, any effort to recapture these routes from the private operators, is something that I personally agree with, other Honourable Members may have a different view. I think that the answer is to have the private operators working alongside the Transport Board, not necessarily choking them out. Again, if you have the Transport Authority, that provides the overall plan for the system, then that would presumably straighten out that situation.

Sir, there are some private operators, who believe that you should assign routes as a way of straightening out the

situation. Again, that is something I do not agree with. I believe in having the individual units owned, even though you might have some persons that own, 2, 3, 4 or 5. I think that it is a good opportunity – I believe I made this point in an early debate on small business – to enfranchise persons, giving them an opportunity to be meaningful players in our economy as entrepreneurs providing public transport. Therefore, I do not think that the answer is to assign particular routes either, as has been done elsewhere where you have an entrepreneur who provides all of the buses for a particular route.

I know that the Transport Authority, is supposed to take effect, maybe the Honourable Member for St. George North, during his wrap up, could say something about it, because I think that is something which has to be looked at carefully.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard mention of the school bus system, again, there is a need for some planning where that is concerned. The umbrella body of the Transport Authority could look at that and see that it is done in a manner that would be consistent with dealing with the issues of moving our school community to and from the various schools in Barbados.

Sir, it has been said before, and it is a worthwhile point even repeating now in light that is on, Operation Freeflow and what not. Sir, congestion is heavily influence by school activity. Mr. Deputy Speaker, driving in Barbados in this time is a different experience all together from when schools are in session. I think that moving towards a dedicated school bus service is a good one and one that is worthy of support. We must accept that if it is going to be done by the Transport Board, many problems in terms of its operations and massive losses, then the efficiency issue, again, would raise its head. It has to be done in a manner that can address that issue.

I must say that we are now buying 70 buses and we have a fleet of close to 140. We seem to go through this process regularly. Barbados is a relatively flat country and when all is said and done, the roads have their issues, there are not the best but there are not the worst either. Surely, at this stage we should have ‘down packed’ what type of vehicle best suits our road and what type of vehicle is suitable for the Transport Board. Perhaps, they could give some sort of specification to the manufacturers, indicating our need for a vehicle that is suited to our situation, that may require, not as much maintenance, that may not have such a short shelf life. Sir, for us to be in here all the time, with Supplementaries and guarantees for new buses, then quite a few of them end up broken down quite early, and are parked at Weymouth. Sir, with the whole issue of how we manage that aspect of our operations, I think we should be further along.

I believe that there was even an occasion, when the Personnel from the workshop of the Transport Board, built a bus from various parts, that they would no doubt have salvaged from vehicles that were useless. That tells me the sort of ingenuity that has been developed in-house and that what I am speaking of is not as farfetched as may appear at first blush.

I do think that we are at that point where we demand what we want. Perhaps, if we could get a local component, we can bring in something that may require to have some value-added done here, that would help some industry, employ some more youngsters who are coming out of the Polytechnic and maybe, even develop, the whole field of automotive engineering, but it clearly has some potential here in Barbados. Those are some areas that we can look at.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I take my seat, the issue of the very large deficit at the Transport Board needs to be also looked at in the context of the fall off in passengers. I have notice, again from the report, 2005, that whereas in 2001/2002 there were over 19 million passengers for the year, it is now just over 18 million. During those years the operation deficit was not \$30 million. In essence, we are seeing that as we come through time, there is an increase in deficit per passenger, and we are now talking about more debt for more buses, and I heard about more routes. Sir, this is at a time when we are seeing more vehicles coming into the island.

3.50 p.m.

Unfortunately, unlike what obtains elsewhere, usually in Barbados when you acquire a vehicle, in essence, you are losing a passenger. If it is that we are going to see a continued fall in the numbers, using the service, yet increasing cost and increasing in debt, it means that the whole situation is really galloping totally out of control. This is why I am of the view that some sort of long-term plan, needs to be employed.

The strategic plan speaks about a mass transit system. I know the Honourable Member for the City likes her park and ride and so on. That is very nice. Those are well-done for the City.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Oh, you never spoke about park and ride. What I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the little creative things that we constantly hear about...

It was water taxis that you spoke about. Forgive me. I just got them mixed up. That is park and ride too. Park and ride in a water taxi. Forgive me. It was the water taxi, not park and ride. I stand corrected.

The point is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in my opinion, we need to look at increasing that figure of the passenger usage. Again, if we are to have a public transportation system that is viable and could function effectively, we need to see those figures increased. It would only happen, if we start to look beyond persons who cannot afford vehicles, persons who may have them and are willing to park them.

Sir, it is not going to happen unless the reliability issue, unless the efficiency issue, unless the time it takes for waiting on a bus and the time it takes to transfer will have to be, if not reduced to minutes, it certainly has to be reliable. You certainly cannot have a system where you are going to sit on a bus and you do not know where it is going to terminate, as we just heard. You cannot function. You cannot plan your life around it, if that is indeed the case. Therefore, I think that is the sort of thinking that needs to be brought on board now, with respect to how we look at the Transport Board and, indeed, how we look at it in the context of our mass transit system.

I trust that we would see something done to bring the Transport Authority into being with dispatch, and that we could have a system that allows for the private operators, not to be choked out by a Transport Board, which is looking desperately for revenue to cover its expenses and that we could have an organised system that is reliable and efficient.

I too would like to see that we do not burden anyone by increasing the bus fares at this stage. I know there was a division at one time in the Cabinet of Barbados on that matter. Certainly, I believe that we are in unison that the bus fares, certainly for the time being, should remain where they are. Sir, let us get the whole system running smoothly, let us get our act together and then, we could look at where we can go from there.

With those few remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am much obliged to you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I too would wish to add some comments and some observations to the discussion. Let me at the outset indicate my support for the guarantee of the \$22 million for the Transport Board, for the purchase of these 70 new vehicles. I think that all Honourable Members so far have really triggered, what are some of the concerns and, of course, some of the praises that we would need to give to the Transport Board.

I recognise that the Honourable Member, who just took his seat spoke about cost. Indeed, cost is a concern for all of us. When you look at how the world is going, and the cost, when it comes to the salaries of workers, the petrol that is being used, the spare parts, the maintenance costs, insurance, liability costs and so on, have escalated over the years and will continue to escalate.

There are many people who have put in claims to the Transport Board for injury. Some who may have slipped and fell in the bus. There are accidents, as we know, over time that call for large amounts to be paid. Sometimes those buses have to be scrapped, as a result of the damage that takes place. Therefore, I can understand at times, the reason the costs are spiralling in that way.

Needless-to-say, Sir, I would wish to add my commendation to the Board and to make some other comments. I wish that they would be adhered to, particularly in December when this new fleet of buses arrive.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in Barbados this is the first time in my life, and I have passed a half century, Sir, that I have ever seen such a good network of roads. This does not mean that many of our communities do not have bad roads, but I believe that the Government's effort to invite the Rural Development Commission, Urban Development Commission, as well as the Ministry of Public Works in helping to construct roads or to upgrade roads, have really made a tremendous difference.

I remember when the famous "Red Plastic Bag" sang about potholes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, every community had massive potholes. Yes, there are some potholes in communities and the roads need urgent attention, but it has been minimised over the years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, when he spoke about the bad roads in some of the rural communities, and how they too are helping to destroy our buses. I hope that the plan the Honourable Minister for Public Works has for the next three or four years, would include those roads in rural Barbados that really demand urgent attention.

Many people had to travel with their shoes in a bag when they went to church to change off. A lot of that has been eliminated but I would wish it to be eliminated across the length and breadth of this country. At the end of the day, all of the people in this country, who are working are taxpayers and they deserve the best. Therefore, I support the Honourable Members on This Side and on the Other Side in that respect.

I believe that I can say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a measure of pride that the people of Barbados do have a lot of

confidence in the Transport Board, and will lend more confidence as long as these buses are put in place, the necessary training and retraining take place, so that the commuters are treated with a measure of respect and a measure of dignity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I commend the management and staff of the Transport Board for an initiative that took place about two years. I will start with the first and come down to the more recent ones. The folk of Forty Acres were suffering day and night. Now the Shorey Village bus goes into Forty Acres to ensure that at 10.00 p.m. to midnight, the residents of that small community are reaching their homes with a measure of safety. I want to thank them sincerely. I have written but I want to publicly say thanks to the Transport Board.

The same has happened, Sir, to the folk of Rock Hall, where the Honourable Member for St. James Central spoke just now about the District "D" bus that is not always reliable. Sir, from 6.00 in the evening, the bus that goes to the St. Andrews Parish Church, diverts into Content and comes through Rock Hall, depositing passengers. This has added a measure of comfort to the lives of those people living in Rock Hall, St. Thomas. Again, I want to thank the management and staff of the Transport Board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, more recently, as a matter of fact, just like a month ago last Saturday, I was a very proud resident of the parish, to have learnt that a request that was made about two years ago was fulfilled. I am extremely grateful to the operations manager. The folk at Lion Castle who have never had a bus going in, except it were a coach that one of the residents would have been driving, are extremely happy and they have called to convey their happiness. The Transport Board has now reinstituted what we knew as the Route 4 Sturges bus that was stopped that has for many years service the people.
4.00 p.m.

You would appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that persons living in Chapman Village and leading all the way to Jackson would be at the tail-end of what we call the Shorey Village bus. Sir, those buses are forever full, which leave the residents from Sturges all the way down to Jackson having to 'beg for a lift', to purchase their own vehicle, to ride on a bicycle, to get a lift in a lorry coming from in the sand hole or to rely on private transportation. Therefore, to have had that bus reinstituted last month has brought a measure of comfort.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Sturges bus does not only travel on the main road, it diverts through Lion Castle comes out through Highland, through 1st Avenue Welchman Hall, exits through 2nd Avenue Welchman Hall onto Bryan Road

and does the horse shoe turn into Allen View, onto Sturges through the Vault Road and back to town.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the kind of transportation and the kind of comfort that rural people deserve because when you look at those streets, those roads or those alleys, if people want to call them that, these people have to walk for more than a mile and at times with luggage. If it is raining, as it does in the parish of St. Thomas every day, they get soak from head to toe. Therefore, I am really happy and I am proud to be associated with that measure to bring some comfort to those residents there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I respect the view that there should be a partnership in the transportation system, and I would like it to continue all the time. My sad feeling comes though more on Sundays, bank holidays and week nights after 7 o'clock because that is when the private vehicles that service most of these communities in the parish where I reside stop operating. After 7 o'clock on a regular week nights and on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays hardly any private transportation passes through the community, and it becomes very difficult for persons wanting to get to the hospital to look for a loved one, to visit a friend and to go to the district hospitals or the children's homes. Therefore, I welcome the Sturges bus and indeed the Transport Board buses because they have to service the commuters day in and day out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want the partnership with the minibuses and so on to be extended. Some of them come around, they drive down to the Post Office at Welchman Hall and if they only have in four passengers, they turn around again and takes sometimes 15 minutes driving up and down with persons in them who want to get to work because they want to get a full bus. I believe that they are now going to be realising the importance of granting quality service to commuters who will support them as long as they drive orderly, as long as they are on time, and the measure of efficiency is being given by them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am also happy too that the bus is running there because too many of our senior citizens and our disabled people cannot get an opportunity. We have a lot of unemployed people as well, but because there was no proper bus system they had to be begging to be able to get to town to do whatever they have to do. They can now enjoy their free ride on the public system. I believe that is something that is really very important to those individuals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make another request publicly, I have already written about it, on behalf of the folk living in Clifton Hill, St. Thomas. Mr. Deputy Speaker, whenever the Sugar Hill buses from St. Joseph get to Clifton Hill they are always jam-packed and the folk at Clifton Hill,

Proute Village, which is in the constituency of St. Joseph more so than in St. Thomas, Bibby's Lane, Lears and Hothersal Turning suffer even after repeated requests by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and myself for the last five years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate that that situation still obtains, and the people who are living in those communities are taxpayers as well. They have needs, their children go to school, they are people who have to get to and from their work on time, but unfortunately very few buses, if any, would stop for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this situation has developed a culture of pirates that continues to ply that route. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to talk about this situation until something is done about it. I believe that Barbadians should always get employment but the illegal component I am not going to support. Sir, there are no less than 15 pirates on that route, but I must tell you that they give a personalised service. They go all through Skeete's Road and all of the avenues in Bibby's Lane and put people at their houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask the Ministry of Public Works and Transport if a bus cannot be put or if a bus route cannot be developed that would at least give two or three permits to those persons who are seeking to ply the route and legitimise them. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if one of those vehicles ever gets into a serious accident and people get injured, and God forbid if anybody loses their life, it is then that we are going to recognise that there is need to do something to service the people of those particular districts that I just mentioned.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those pirates do not have the adequate insurance or permits to ply the route and it is going to create a serious challenge in this country. I want the Honourable Minister and all those who are within earshot that can do something about it to be able to ease the tension over in Clifton Hill and that route that brings one down to Hothersal Turning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to indicate that a well-organised bus service will minimise the number of vehicles on the road. I left this Chamber before when my niece was using my vehicle and had to take the public transport, and I had a wonderful ride. I felt safer. There was no boom, boom, boom in my ears. There was no reckless driving, no milk shake or anything with the Transport Board bus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that as long as a proper bus system could be put in place with schedules that more Barbadians would want to take the Transport Board buses

because they would know that when they are standing at the bus stop at 7 o'clock a bus is going to pass that would have left town at 7 o'clock to pick them up if they are in Barbarees Hill, so it would get there around 10 past or a quarter past the hour, or if they are coming from St. Thomas to town they would know that at 5 past 7 they can wait at Welchman Hall and get a bus to take them to town. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as long as that confidence is there, people would take the bus and leave their vehicles at home.

Sir, if I had my own way, I would leave my vehicle at home simply because every time I go to the gas station, I have to fork out \$125 and \$130. If I could pay a \$1.50 going and \$1.50 coming, I could use those funds to help with charities and do so many other things. Sir, we need to get the bus service with proper schedules and to develop that efficiency because people already have confidence in the safety that can be derived from using the Government service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a small number of the Transport Board workers appear to be very discourteous and disrespectful at times, that is why the point that was made by the Honourable Member is so well supported. I believe that a supervisor should be able to instruct a driver as to what his or her route is and that driver should be adhering to the instructions, so that when a driver is told to go to the Sturges Route, he or she would not be able to say they cannot send them up there and the other things that are said sometimes along with the expletives that are used.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the training and the retraining would be able to better prepare those drivers for the task that they have ahead. Courtesy and professionalism are still very important in this whole exercise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will support any effort that will help to sensitise the workers at the Transport Board that they owe it to the public to grant a high quality service and the public owes it to them to show them respect. Therefore, I support the effort for the training and the retraining as customer service is a priority. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that if our workers are on the cutting edge it would help to make a difference in the service that is being offered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to touch on the maintenance of the vehicles because of the roads which are not as adequate as they should be in some instances. I know that some distances are very long. Sir, to say that Barbados is not a hilly country is not fully correct because when you look at places like White Hill and Spring Vale in St. Andrew, Horse Hill in St. Joseph and Chalky Mount in St. Andrew, those are hilly communities and when buses have to be working those routes consistently there is a measure of depreciation that will kick in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the constant maintenance of the buses is pertinent to the continued existence of the buses on the road.
4.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the manufacturers determine that every three months the buses should be serviced, that should happen. Therefore, the Transport Board has to have those systems in place – if they do not now – of persons monitoring those buses, to see when servicing should take place, for example, when tyres or the oil needs to be checked. Those are small things, in our opinion, but they are very important, if the vehicles are to last for as long as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to admonish those drivers, especially the drivers who would be driving the 70 new buses coming in, to ensure that safety is the priority. When buses are destroyed by accidents or through lack of maintenance, those buses would have to be taken off the road. Therefore, in 2006/2007, I do not want to be hearing that buses are out of service and that they are sitting down at the Weymouth's compound for two or three months, waiting for maintenance. If there are mechanics working in association with the Transport Board, we expect them to give of their best. Mechanics must be paid for the service they are offering, so that at the end of the day, Barbadians are the ones who would benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to address the issue of vandalism. Sir, while many Barbadians believe that only the young people vandalise those buses, I would wish to say that is not true. I do not understand what is happening, as it is not always the young people. There are senior persons in our society, who deface the buses. People still eat in the buses and drop their garbage, such as nutshells and sweet wrappers on the floor. When these persons have to be told about their littering, they can be heard making remarks, such as what would the workers or sweepers do, if they do not litter, and that it is those persons' job to keep the buses clean. It is the same poor attitude that people have, where many would go into the public toilets and deface the walls or would stand on the toilet bowls, instead of sitting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there is a very poor set of attitude among our people that needs to be corrected. I also think that when young people see adults doing the right things, they would follow by example. When young people are cautioned, when caught doing wrong things, more often than not, most of them adhere. Therefore, vandalism must be stamped out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the first time in my life, in 1980, I visited New York, after going to Canada. Sir, I do not like New York, as a result of that. Sir, it has really affected me, when I saw how the buses and trains were

defaced, and I do not think that I have been back to New York in a total of three times since then. I will always go to Canada because I like the cleanliness, the ambience and the attitudes of the people because the Canadians do not throw their garbage all over the place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would wish to say that when Barbadians go to Canada, they have to conform to those sanitary practices but in Barbados they throw their garbage all over the place. Sir, no nutshell, garbage nor drink containers should be found on our buses. If, perhaps, it is a newspaper, I could understand that someone might have read it and might have forgotten it, or they might have left it for someone else to read. Sir, I think the amount of garbage being left on our buses is very unfortunate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe this additional fleet would help with the transportation of our school children. I believe we do need a dedicated school bus system. This was something that was looked at about six years ago, when the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was Minister of Education and subsequent to that, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know of the number of challenges that would take place, as we have already met with the private sector in this regard because we believe that partnership is extremely important. Therefore, we await further discussion with the Transport Board and the Ministry of Public Works, in order for us to see how, at least, it could be implemented in a phased manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would appreciate that depending on where children live, they would have to take two buses to get to school. Therefore, if the first bus is late, it would mean that by the time the children reach the particular location for the next bus, they would definitely reach school late. Sir, I believe these 70 new buses would help to alleviate some of those challenges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can speak proudly of what takes place at the Lester Vaughan School, where there is an enrolment of about 1 200 children. Sir, when two buses come from the Transport Board, that is like a drop of water in the sea, because of the fact that those two buses cannot service the amount of children, most of whom would be going into the Bridgetown area, to get the connecting buses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, therefore, in this regard, the Ministry of Education is very much in favour of a dedicated school bus system and will lend all support to the Ministry of Public Works and the Transport Board, to be able to ensure that measure of comfort would be given to the children of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am a stickler for punctuality and regularity. This is because of my overall training, not only in my former job but from my household. I believe that if we continue to train our children to be early, to be regular for school, it would help to inculcate a habit of wanting to get to work early and regularly some time in the future. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we could institute a transport system that would help to promote such qualities, I believe the discipline would redound to our workforce, homes and other institutions and that a measure of productivity would develop, as a result.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I close, I would want to touch on the area relating to the use of the Transport Board buses for tours, sightseeing, *et cetera*. I know there are some days when we would love to have excursions and bus rides but it would put a serious dent, as the current situation is now, in the buses that would have to service the regular routes. Sir, therefore, in so doing, this would cause me to have to call the Transport Board, to find out why the District "D" bus has not come for the last three or four hours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe these 70 new buses that would be added to the fleet, would also be used by schools and other organisations for various tours, *et cetera*. Again, those are areas in which revenue could be generated for the Transport Board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the time when these buses would be brought into the system, and working in association with the Transport Board, in ensuring that the areas that have pockets of challenges in the constituency of St. Thomas, would, at least, have a measure of ease and comfort for the people, who live in those areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with those comments that I lend my support to the Guarantee and look forward to the increase buses that would serve the people of Barbados. I thank you.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to join this debate and at the outset to say that I do support the Guarantee of the \$22 million loan for the Transport Board. I also want to say that I think a decision has to be taken by this Administration, as to how the Transport Board is to be viewed. I think a decision has to be made as to whether it is to be viewed in the sense that it is a public good, in the interest of those who would require public transport or whether it is going to be seen as a revenue-generating entity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that because we have a hybrid system, one which utilises a public, as well as a private fleet of buses on the roads, that a decision has to be taken and that the whole rationalisation of how one

distributes the various routes, how one utilises the buses with respect to the various times on the roads, needs to be looked at.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a representative of a rural parish, I have problems, particularly in a number of areas where there is a very poor bus service. In fact, on numerous occasions, I have been asked about a dedicated bus service to the new area of Breezy Hill, Stages Two and Three. At Stages One, Two and Three, there are probably 240 homes in those areas, yet there is no dedicated bus service.

We also have a problem in Fairview, where similar problems exist, where persons have to travel more than a mile, in trying to access buses, particularly during the evening. There are also areas in St. Patricks, where the minibus services are not now in operation, which could do well with a designated bus service.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from that perspective, I wanted to look and see if this problem with the Transport Board is an endemic problem that necessitates Government's viewing the problems of the Transport Board as a public good. Sir, as a result, I looked at the Financial Statements and Annual Reports from 1991 to 1995 and what I find interesting in reviewing the data was that even though there was a reduction in the total number of employees from 1 214 in 1991 to approximately in 2004/2005 to about 692 workers or thereabout. Sir, even though there were that significant reduction in the total number of workers employed, when I looked at the operating revenue from way back in 1991, and compared the revenue to that of 2004/2005, the revenue had basically not changed at all, a revenue of about \$25 million average.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is also interesting is the phenomenon of the increase in the number of cars on the road without a doubt has had a significant impact on ridership. When one looks at data in 1992, we had a total ridership of about 16 000 000 and when we look at 2004/2005 and 2005/2006, we were averaging about 18 000 000 persons which means that we are looking of a reduction of 2 000 000 persons utilising the buses on a regular basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, without a doubt, this has to be related to the increase in the number of private vehicles owned by individuals who would not be utilising the bus service if they had access to their own vehicles. Sir, another phenomenon jumps out which suggests to me that the Administration has to see the Transport Board as a public good and be prepared to effect the type of subsidisation of its operation as required. This does not mean that you support inefficiency, squandermania or a chronic incapacity where better could be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason why this becomes important is because part of the problem which this Administration has to face is the fact that many of the statutory corporations are in serious debt. The extrapolation from that, is that if your statutory entities are in debt, without a doubt, that debt has to be covered by Central Government. The long and short of that means that when you look at Government expenditure, it would reflect that with respect to its transfer and subsidies as well. In addition, it may also mean that Government has to do exactly what it is doing today, that is, guaranteeing debt but you are guaranteeing a debt for an already indebted entity. The question is this. Is this something that can be continued over a long-term basis and, Sir, I am not convinced that it can. The reason why I say this is because I make reference to the Auditor-General Report for 2005, where he indicates as at March 31, 2005, there was a Guarantee Debt expressed as Contingent Liabilities of \$526,890 000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one looks at the guarantees that would have been passed by this Honourable Chamber, we had a total of \$485 million in guarantees since that period of time. Therefore, it gives us a total figure of over \$1 billion in guarantees that would have passed since March 31, 2005, which would be inclusive of \$38 million to BIDC, \$250 million to the Barbados Water Authority, \$25 million to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, \$5 million to Sanitation Authority, and I could go on and on, if you want me to do this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point is that it would be \$1 billion in Guarantee Debt, if one then looks at the economic and financial statistics for May 2006 and one looks at the Central Government Debt. Sir, the Central Government Debt is listed on average for January, February and March and is about \$5 billion. Sir, when one adds the Central Government Debt to the Guarantee Debt, it brings the total Public Sector Debt to \$6 million on average. When one then utilises that data to calculate the Total Public Sector Debt to GDP, it gives you a staggering 91 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and, Sir, that is bankruptcy by any standard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the reason why I am making the call the even though we may support guarantees for corporations that provide an effective service to Barbados, it is necessary that we look very closely at not supporting inefficient entities and allowing money, essentially, to be squandered because it cannot be sustained in an economy that has the type of debt profile which Barbados has at this particular point in time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is from that perspective that I wanted to raise these particular views. I feel that in reviewing the statistical data from the Transport Board that we will have to subsidise the Transport Board. I am not convinced that everything is being done that could cut cost. The reason

why I say this is because in the rural areas, there must be a mechanism to determine when people are on the road. Sir, there must be a mechanism because people move about, not willy-nilly and all too often I would see these buses making these long hauls with nobody in them at all or one or two persons in these particular buses. Sir, interestingly enough, while that may be the case, the private minibuses are all filled. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is telling me something, that there is a marketing problem.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, if it is a cultural problem, you have to market with respect to the culture because the culture is a variable, so it means that it is a marketing problem. If the target market is shifting for whatever set of variables, it means that the Transport Board must necessarily move with that as well. If it does not, it would always mean that the private vehicle would be filled and the Transport Board buses would be empty, that is what now obtains, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand the difficulty that the Honourable Member for St. George North and I would want to give him my full support with respect to this guarantee and I would want to ask him to look carefully at the provision of a dedicated bus service to those residents in the Breezy Hill, Stages 1, 2 and 3; in the St. Patrick's area and also with respect to people on the main road of Fairview in Christ Church.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you.
4.30 p.m.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I will like to thank all Honourable Members who spoke on this Resolution. I also want to assure them that we have taken note of the problems that they are encountering in their constituencies and their suggestions.

Sir, I briefly want to make the point, that even though it is widely regarded as a poor service, I think every effort is being made to improve the transport system, in Barbados. Sir, this Government in the last twelve years has subsidised the operations of the Transport Board. Generally we have had good managers who have tried their best and employers who go beyond the call of duty, however, there is a need for improved management in the bus terminals. I also believe that the terminals need to operate more businesslike. Efforts will be made in the next few months, to update and improve the computer systems within the terminals. Mr. Deputy Speaker, too often we hear persons complain that buses have to be rescheduled and so on.

Sir, we have a dedicated bus system in Barbados. There is a need for both the public transport system and the

private sector to work hand-in-hand. Sir, a perfect example is the bus service from Sargeant Street and Bayfield. The public and private buses operate on this route together even late at night and it seems to be working well. Certainly, in some areas in urban Barbados, like the Pine and Grazettes, we found that even though the private sector has managed to monopolise those bus routes, people have been complaining that they need the Transport Board buses back on those routes.

Sir, we would have to look at that, because we would not want to push out the private sector. I believe that they can operate hand-in-hand. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I mentioned the two lucrative routes of Sargeant Street and Bayfield, where the private and public sector work hand-in-hand. I also want to say that we are looking at rescheduling a number of bus services and routing buses into communities that really need them. Sir, new communities, develop from time to time, and we have to see how best we can service those communities, across Barbados.

I want to make the point that we are now operating a service that starts at 4.00 a.m. and goes to 1.00 a.m. the next day. The Transport Board is now operating almost twenty-two hours. They are now operating twenty-two hours on any route. Certainly, they have started a service and they would want to improve as they go along.

We need to work with the Unions, with the workers as well as management to promote the best of practices. Some Honourable Members spoke about people being treated badly. I do not think this is in every case, but we have to eliminate some of these bad practices that may crop up from time to time.

Sir, with those remarks, I believe that we have a very good bus service which we will have to subsidise from time to time, because the Transport Board is not yet out of the woods. We will have to continue guaranteeing some of the debt service, as well as the operating service on an annual basis. We can only improve as we go along. Sir, with the additional 70 new buses, I believe would help to improve the bus service in the future.

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

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

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

ORDER NO. 16 – RESOLUTION THAT THIS HOUSE RESOLVES ITSELF INTO COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY TO CONSIDER THE GRANT OF SUMS OF MONEY FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND FOR THE SERVICE OF THE ISLAND

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. G. A. CLARKE, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. R. D. MARSHALL, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee of Supply.

ORDER NO. 16 – RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$449 435.00 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2006-2007 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 1, 2006-2007

HEAD 38 – MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LANDS – \$449 439.00

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

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Chairman, this Resolution before this Committee of Supply seeks to obtain some funding in the sum of \$449 439 to supplement Head 38 in the Estimates of Expenditure for this year. This is in relation to a specific programme within the Ministry of Housing and Lands, a programme called The Housing Neighbourhood and Upgrading Project. This is project for which we have been in discussion with the Inter-American Development Bank, to trigger a number of things. First a series of reforms within the Ministry to allow us to improve the housing and neighbourhood conditions, particularly in low and middle income neighbourhoods across the island, with special emphasis on urban lower income neighbourhoods. We are also seeking to improve and expand housing systems, as they relate to developing and maintaining affordable housing in Barbados. Of course, we would be seeking to do some institutional strengthening, in order to allow us to better provide those services.

Sir, the discussion with the Inter-American Development Bank is really intended to trigger access to \$80 million in funding for affordable low income housing in Barbados. By way of this Supplementary, we are seeking to

establish and staff the project unit, which would indicate that this project has been in the works for a while. In fact, Sir, discussions would have gone back to 1998, initially, and from 2003 with greater intensity.

Sir, the stage we are at now is one where having had, not only preliminary discussions but also agreement with Inter-American Development Bank on the project design. Sir, they have ProQuest Funding of which \$3 million is available to Barbados for pre-project expenditure, \$750 000 of that would be available for this and other projects to fund consultancies and other project preparation materials.

However, it is the responsibility of the Government of Barbados to provide the funding for the full-time staffing of the project management and coordinating unit. This is simply what we are seeking to do. We could not have done this at the beginning of the financial year, because all the necessary ingredients and components were not in place.

Sir, although discussions were ongoing, they were not at a stage of conclusion where we could fund the staff. We would be using the Supplementary here to fund it and in the next year's estimates, the full cost of the fund would be included as part of the regular Estimates. Sir, this project, is intended to have a few components. Sir, just very quickly, let me explain these components. I know that the hour is late. 4.40 p.m.

First of all, Sir, the neighbourhood upgrading component of this project, for which we are in discussion with the IADB, with respect to a \$40 million injection, includes improvement to several areas around the island. In fact, research has indicated that there are some 130 communities around Barbados, which fit the profile of communities in which there is a need for improvement.

They display the characteristics of having deficiencies, in relation to a number of amenities, which we now consider standard and should be available to every community. These would include low income neighbourhoods, where we need to widen and pave roads, improve drainage and sanitation, do street lighting, where that is not in place already, and improve water distribution. In some cases, it would mean the absolute access to water. In many cases, it would mean having water mains which are safe, secure and reliable, rather than each person running hundreds of yards of small pipes across other people's property, in a kind of spider web configuration to get access to the water.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: It would also mean, very fundamentally, addressing an issue of security of tenure,

many of these areas are tenancies, some structured, some unstructured. It would mean dealing with the issue of home improvements, and things of that nature.

Sir, there are 130 of these communities around the island. As a pilot phase for this home improvement project, we have identified four locations for which advance work has already been done, by way of planning. Two of them are in the heart of urban Barbados, Cats Castle and Greenfield. We believe that it is fundamentally important to address those as special cases. The other two sites are Garden Land in Country Road and Allen View, in the precinct of Harrison's Cave in St. Thomas.

Those would have been identified, Sir, because of the peculiar needs but also they represent the commitment of the Government of Barbados to make sure that growth and development are balanced. For example, take the two residential communities in Bridgetown, all around them would have been improvements and expansion, by way of investments in the commercial sector, such as stores, offices and other public infrastructure.

Sir, cities are meant to be lived in. They are not just commercial spaces, where you go and you leave. We believe fundamentally that it is important to improve people's conditions where they are. Indeed, this project is also inspired by a philosophy, which is relatively new. It says that you can improve neighbourhoods, and maintain those neighbourhoods where they are. Even though conditions may not be good in a specific neighbourhood, when you do your social assessment, you recognise there is a strong sense of community, there are bonds of family and other bonds.

Therefore, the society would be richer, if you are able to do the improvements for the persons who are residents of the community, rather than undertake the old version of improvement, which usually meant, flatten the area and move the persons somewhere else.

Sir, this Housing Neighbourhood and Upgrading Project would be focusing on improving the communities for the people in the community and minimising, if not eliminating any relocations in order to effect those improvements. The positive social benefit, we think, would be very fundamental. For example, Cats Castle and Greenfield would be improved, while ensuring that the people who live there, will continue to live there, so that even if they move out during the period of construction, where in some cases you may not be able to do the construction with them there, the reality is that the persons who have been there all of those years, will in the new rejuvenated communities be the ones to benefit. They will continue to maintain the relationships, which they have built and the sense of community, which they have developed over the many years.

Those projects then, Sir, are at an advanced stage of planning. Indeed, this project staff, that staff will include a project coordinator, an engineer, research investigators, administrative staff and the like. Other services, such as architectural and other technical services will be purchased on a consultancy basis, but there is a need for a core staff to deal with tendering, other procurement and to generally drive the process forward.

Sir, the other component of this project would be the matter of support for the production of affordable housing. We are looking at a \$24 million component of the project, which we are discussing with the Inter-American Development Bank. Sir, for that project, we are looking at spending some \$40 million for the development of 400 to 500 lots for low income earners. This would, of course, fund the acquisition of land, installation of roads, electricity, water and other infrastructure.

There would also be a component in this project as well, which would provide enhanced financial support for persons in the lower income strata, or the income deciles, as they are called. There will be strict income qualifying criteria because we recognise, Sir, that at the end of day, if we use the rules of a thumb, as they relate to access to mortgages, there will be people who are on the lowest end of the income earning strata who may not, without some form of financial assistance, be able to afford, by way of a mortgage purchase, even the lowest cost house that is put on the market. Sir, between ourselves and the bank, we are looking at the kind of subsidy mechanism, which can be developed, in order to ensure that we are providing financing for that particular category.

Additionally, there is the issue of incremental house construction, which is a very strong Barbadian tradition. It is part of our culture, and it is to be greatly encouraged, rather than halted. This will feature in this project.

In fact, the 2000 Population Census indicated that 30 per cent of the housing construction was done on an incremental basis. People built their foundation. They build on at the back, build a little piece at the front and they go on improving. We have found that part of the challenge usually is access to finance.

Sir, much of that finance is provided by trade credit, provided by building supplies stores. They will naturally have a cap, usually a maximum of about \$6 000. They only get the second loan after you have cleared the first. Part of this really would relate to two things. One is providing financing institutions like credit unions and others can use for on-lending. Two is providing the technical assistance to financial institutions to get them to better understand the

peculiarities of financing incremental building projects. Therefore, this will give Barbadians options beyond trade credit from materials suppliers for use in their incremental building projects, which, like I said, is part of our rich culture of housing ourselves. Sir, included in this project with the IADB, is a component related to that.

Finally, a component of the project of some \$16 million for institutional strengthening in the housing sector, dealing with things like the necessary modernisation of the National Housing Corporation, as well as the Ministry of Housing and Lands, to improve their systems of land and property management, improve their management process, and the management of their finances. Sir, this is generally to make sure that out of this project, the institutions find a new mandate, that they are run better, so that the necessary replication of the project can be done.

4.50 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it makes no sense imposing a good new project on old institutions which are doing things in the old way, which institutions are then required to manage the new project. Therefore, we have to modernise and strengthen the institutions which would be involved with the project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of the output of this project, it is really designed such that 2 000 new houses are projected to be built for families under this financing which is provided. Based on the project design, some 600 families in the lowest income decile, to use a technical term, would be able to have improvement to their houses. In terms of the number of households which would have a positive impact from the upgrades of the neighbourhoods in which they are currently located, it is projected, based on the survey work so far, that some 1 000 households would benefit from the upgrades of the neighbourhood.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a thumbnail sketch of the project which would be the singular focus of this project unit to be established within the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I therefore would want to urge that this Parliament gives its support for this expenditure under Head 38.

As I said, Sir, the project has been in design for sometime, but we were not in a position to conclude all arrangements such as would have allowed us to put this figure into the Estimates for the beginning of the financial year but they would continue to be in as a regular item under Head 38, Subprogramme 500 under various Object Classifications within that capital expenditure.

With that brief explanation, Sir, I beg to move that Head 38 stand part.

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

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I wish to give my unreserved support to this Resolution. I want to thank the Minister of Housing and Lands that he and those in his Ministry have been able to bring it to this Place. I also want to give my thanks to all of the Ministers of Housing since 1998, who have helped to bring it to this Place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I tell young Honourable Members of Parliament that they have to have the patience of Job. I have waited longer than this for other projects and so have the people in the City of Bridgetown. I am pleased that this is yet another kind of housing solution that is coming to Barbados because the Inter-American Development Bank, I believe, is disposed to use this as a model so to speak that would be followed elsewhere in our region. It is not unknown outside of our region.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have waited for a long time for this and the people in the City, particularly in the Cats Castle area and in Greenfield, have been long-suffering. I have tried to keep them aware of the programme at every stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, important studies had to be done. There is a community involvement strategy and a socio-demographic comparative analysis that was done of very thorough work looking at every single household in each of these four pilot areas: house tenure; households by year of construction; households by land tenure; households by source of energy for cooking; households by computers in households and internet access.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this project is to begin in Cats Castle. Almost a year ago, on the 23rd of August, we had the first Town Hall meeting and people came out and became very excited and are anticipating that this new housing solution will follow. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be different. It would not be like the London Bourne Towers or Kensington Lodge, it would be a mix. As the Honourable Minister has pointed out, roads would be upgraded, certainly in Cats Castle. It would have to be linked to the sewerage system. It would mean a lift station because of the difference in gradient between Cats Castle...

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the benefit of Honourable Members who are not aware of where Cats Castle is, Cats Castle is bounded on one side by Reed Street and on the other side by Mason Hall Street, and then you have a little grid, Bulls Alley, Spooners Alley and Clarke's Alley. The people in Barbados would not even know them because they are not even sign-posted but the people who live there know them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what would happen is that houses that are in relatively good condition but in need of some upgrading would be upgraded. There are some houses which are almost derelict and cannot be upgraded, and so there is going to be a mix of individual housings. There would be

one or two blocks possibly, and an open space will be available so that recreational and other activities can take place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the St. Mary's Church is very supportive of it. The old St. Mary's Infants School on Mason Hall Street, which is now housing the City depot of the Sanitation Service Authority, wants to become an integral part of this project by way of providing community services and activities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a great deal of consultation has gone on already. Schools have had to be examined and interfaced with in this whole process. The Ministry of Health, not only the Sanitation Service Authority, but where it is serviced by a polyclinic, Warrens, in the case of Cats Castle, and the Sir Winston Scott Polyclinic, which services the up town area of Bridgetown... A whole raft of services which need to be available to these communities have been looked at.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased with the work that is going on and I want to use this opportunity to congratulate all of those people, many of them young bright people, who have a sense of community – we beat up on the town people a lot – who have brought a great deal of tender loving care to this project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am delighted that it has reached a stage now where the moneys are going to be put in place. This is an important point of departure for the Inter-American Development Bank. It never has funded anything to do with housing in the history of its relationship with Barbados. I suspect that it goes back to even before 1998.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1994, there was an Inter-American Development Bank team here and I put them in a coach and took them down to Cats Castle and drove them all through New Orleans and made them get out and walk about in the hot sun. I have photographs to prove it.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: The Honourable Member for St. George North remembers it. It was a new experience for them, and out of that has come this.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas remembers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has taken all of this time but we have arrived at this point. The people in Cats Castle have some understanding of it. The whole concept of the project has to do with people's participation. It is felt that when people participate in the project, they bring a different

attitude to it, although I have to say that sometimes that principle is overstated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we were building the London Bourne Towers there were those who said, and even some who even still now say, that it was too good to put before the likes of the people who live in the City of Bridgetown.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would invite any member of the public or any Honourable Member to go there now, unannounced. They would see that those places are well-kept and beautifully maintained. Sir, the same thing is going to happen in this project, people only want to be lifted out of poverty. Therefore, when persons are given that 'leg up', it is amazing how they carry themselves forward. I have seen it everywhere in Bridgetown. I have seen it in Kensington Lodge, where people are now buying their apartments. I have seen it at London Bourne and I know it is going to happen at Cats Castle and Greenfield.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Greenfield is a very deprived and underprivileged community, bounded on the southern side by Roebuck Street and on the western side by White Park Road. Gills Road runs through it, so to speak. It is bounded on the eastern side by the National Housing Corporation and by a watercourse, which runs under Roebuck Street, past the Louis Lynch School and down to Princess Alice Highway.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that community at Greenfield has a historic connection. The Calvary Moravian Church on Roebuck Street, backs into Greenfield and has behind it an old burial ground, which has much been destroyed now. They were very important headstones there, up to a few years ago but over time people have destroyed and carted them away. That Church is a very old site and has a lot of historic significance, but the community around it has been very depressive for a very long time, and they too are looking forward to an upgrade in their circumstances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not very far away from these two urban pockets lies the Garden Land, across Country Road. This area is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Michael West. It then runs into rural Barbados and into Allen View, which is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is very important. It is important that the adjuncts to which the Honourable Member has made reference, be put in place. There has to be a unit. There has to be a core of people, who go to work every day, to make this project happen. Sir, the bank, thorough as it always is, recognises that there have to be upgrades in the Ministry of Housing and Lands and in the National Housing Corporation, in order for this not to be a one-off project. As the Honourable Member has pointed out, there are 130 other

pockets of depressed housing in Barbados, which, in due course, must benefit from this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very special day and even though the hour is late and we are tired, and the Honourable House wants to rise for the summer recess, I am prepared to detain the House a little bit longer on this matter because it is of the greatest importance to me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is all that would be remaining for me, in the City of Bridgetown, that being an upliftment.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: It is not a gift, I have worked hard and long for this. I have given 30 years of my life for this. The people of the City of Bridgetown have deserved this for a long time now. They have waited their turn and that turn is now arriving. This is a promise and a commitment that is being fulfilled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people in our communities in Barbados take so much for granted. We do not handle our affluence very well. Barbadians might not like to be told that they are affluent but when compared to many other countries in the Caribbean, it would show that they are, indeed, affluent, when compared to countries that are professedly richer than ours, where there is a level of poverty that we do not know. Sir, this Administration is determined – that is why there is a Ministry of Social Transformation – that we will not only seek to alleviate poverty but we believe that in our time, that we could eradicate it. Sir, this debate today is part and parcel of that process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition, this matter today would help us too, in realising some of the Millennium Development Goals. Sir, I am still hoping that Barbados might be one of the few developing countries in the world, and might possibly be one of the only developing countries in the world, that would, by 2015, have realised the Eight Millennium Goals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this touches on many issues. There are many sensitivities quivering here. Not only are people waiting in these four communities but people are waiting in the communities beyond it. Therefore, we have to get it right in these four models, so that it can be easily and rapidly replicated in maybe every constituency, as I am sure that every Honourable Member can point to a number of places, where this is the right fit and the right housing solution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome it. I am very pleased that it has come at this time and, therefore, I will continue to lend my support to it. I can promise the Honourable Minister and the Ministry of Housing and Lands, that I am going to

be unrelenting. I am going to continue to make their lives miserable, if I have to do so, so that this will happen. That is a promise.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would want to commend this measure to Honourable Members. I would expect that we would all give our willing support to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many housing solutions in the City of Bridgetown, apart from other things, and this happens so often in inner cities, people sometimes have to give way to other kinds of developments. Therefore, in this regard, more people have been relocated from the City of Bridgetown, than from any other constituencies or neighbourhoods in Barbados. For example, people had to be relocated, so that Kensington Lodge could have become a reality. People had to be relocated and it took me many years, and years in Opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people had to be relocated, especially little old ladies living up town. I had to explain to one lady, a Mrs. Jones, the fact that I know she was an old lady, her husband had died and the fact that she had lived all her life on that spot and that it is the only home that she would have known but that in the barracks behind her backyard, a family lives in one room and there is communal bathing in the waterloo bath and communal cooking in the backyard, and that for them to have a better life, it would mean that she would have to be relocated. Sir, that was patiently done over years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying these things for the benefit of young Parliamentarians, who think that these things could happen in a five-year term.

Sir, out of that rose the London Bourne Towers. People now have to be relocated, for the second time, to accommodate the Sewerage Treatment Plant. Sir, I understand that more than anybody else but the Minister of Housing and Lands has given me his word – we know because it has passed Cabinet – that letters are about to go out and that the site, which we have all visited, is about to be cleared and work we hope, would soon begin. Once people are agreeable to the terms and conditions, that relocation like the one at Pickwick before it will move with a certain amount of dispatch.

5.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to lend my support to the Resolution before the House.

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

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I should be very brief. I want to express my delight in recognising that the

people of Allan View are included in this Project. I want to publicly say how thankful I am to the Government for bringing this Project to nearer fruition.

Mr. Chairman, you were aware that the folk of Allan View are nestled in a little view before you reach Harrisons Cave. They possess some qualities that are encouraging when it comes to the cohesiveness of that village. Sir, most of them are families which have expanded in the same village. They are hard-working people who are extremely loyal to one another and to this country and so for them to be included in this Neighbourhood Improvement Project blesses my heart particularly from the point of view that for the last 15 years they have been told that the Cave has to be expanded and therefore, they have been prohibited from building new houses, they have been told that some aspect of agriculture cannot take place. Indeed, some residents have been relocated as a result of the raising of pigs and so on and the possible pollution of the stalagmites and the stalactites in the Cave.

Mr. Chairman, this is not the first time that I know of this measure. It is more than six to eight months that I have been made aware of it and I welcome it from the beginning. I know that a small community has been identified as well that will work with the team and go into that village with this Enhancement Project.

Mr. Chairman, I know that there are at least six households in the village which have no running water. They have not been given water even though they have applied because of the large volumes of water that would impact on the Cave. Sir, some of them can upgrade their houses but they cannot build new ones and, as you would appreciate, Mr. Chairman, that if families die and you can look at the property and just do small-scale agriculture but cannot do anything with it, that it will create some challenges.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy that this has happened and that these folk in Allan View will get a measure of hope. I trust that the Mini Sewerage Project will take place, that they will get their water-borne toilets, those who do not yet have and that they can at least be able to pursue that small-scaled agriculture which has been going on that would help to supplement the various incomes of the people in the village.

Mr. Chairman, I trust that I would be able in my lifetime to see this Project come to fruition because I believe that the people of that village who felt at one time that they were more disenfranchised than anyone else and they who have their reasons for that belief. Sir, today they will be saying how happy they are to have been identified in this Project. I trust that from time to time that the Honourable Chamber would be given a report as to how the Project is advancing. Indeed, I am grateful to the Government for having included a rural community in this exercise because

not many rural communities have ever been included in a Project of this nature.

Mr. Chairman, Government has recognised that there is need to bring a measure of comfort to the folk in Allan View and I strongly support this particular exercise and the Resolution for the funding that has been asked for. I wish to thank the Honourable Minister and his Staff of the Ministry of Housing and Lands for bringing this to the Chamber.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Chairman, I know the hour is late but I feel constrained to add my voice in support of the Resolution in light of the fact that the Garden Land which is a community in St. Michael West stands to benefit also significantly as a result of this programme. Perhaps, Garden Land is the largest geographical space of the four areas and I would want to put on record, the appreciation of the residents of the Garden Land that the village is being considered for neighbourhood enhancement, upgrading and improvement and for several reasons that Honourable Members would not want me to take the time to go into in detail.

Mr. Chairman, I simply want to express appreciation on their behalf to the Ministry of Housing and Lands and to the Government for including them in this Programme and look forward to its actual execution with despatch.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I wish I could be joining my other three Colleagues in thanking the Government for identifying a community in my constituency to be part of the Pilot Project. It is a little unfortunate because there are several communities in St. Michael South Central that are very much like the Garden Land and maybe one or two like Cats Castle and Greenfield. Sir, I still have family in Mason Hall Street, I know Cats Castle even though a lot of people do not know where it is and they think you are in a foreign place.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I do believe that Rehabilitation Project and the idea of keeping a neighbourhood in tact is something very worthwhile. I sincerely hope that what we have here is truly a pilot and that it will spread to the other 140 communities. Sir, St. Michael South Central, my community does not have a lot of open space that would lend itself to terrace units, *et cetera*. This

Project is perhaps the only real solution to truly break the back of the housing problem. Stewart's Lodge is only about 28 units which is usually just a drop in the bucket.

Mr. Chairman, as the only Member on This Side who represents an urban community, I would want to see that this actually comes to fruition. I am not sure whether I should be thanking the IADB or the Government because we should thank both. Surely, with what we have seen happening in Central Bridgetown, we know that there are resources to spend in Bridgetown but it is where they are spent. I would not attempt to be invidious, Mr. Chairman, but I would certainly hope that what the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown said is true, that I would have to wait until I am in my third or fourth term to finally see something happening to the people of Halls Road...
5.20 p.m.

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

Mr. R. D. JONES: Sir, when one looks at the whole issue of housing in Barbados, and I know that Honourable Members have spoken to this, so I do not necessarily want to repeat what was said, but it screams for some real solutions, and one would have hoped that the Ministry of Housing, adding to the work of the private people, would at this stage have broken the back of the difficulty of housing in Barbados.

As I look through the areas identified by the National Housing Corporation over time, I realise that there is a level of silence relative to one area. Sometime ago, Kent, as part of Christ Church, and I believe everyone in here knows where Kent is, was identified for development for, I believe, 280 houses. Therefore, I want to know if we are going to have that project dust off from some way or is it an abandoned project. I do not know.

Sir, many persons who rent in the general area, when they were aware of this they were calling me a dime a dozen to find out if something was happening there. I could not answer them and I keep asking...

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: I am not the Ministry of Housing and Lands. I cannot go in there and throw walls. Do you want me to carry drills and knock down the walls? If you want me to take backhoes and knock down places, then I could do that.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: The point is, I want to ask the Minister what has become of the Kent project. Is it an abandoned project? Is it a project that is waiting for some

kind of support or money? Sir, that part of Christ Church is a highly-developed area but there is still need for housing in that part of it.

Mr. Chairman, I heard of some housing in Kendal Hill but one has not seen any action at all in relation to that.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: I am doing a lot about it. I am putting up shanties on the highway, that is what I am doing about it, then that will initiate action. I am going to come down to the City, push down a lot of the derelict buildings, rehabilitate the sites and put people from Christ Church down there. That is what I am doing about it. It seems as though some people want me to get locked up. I hope that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown does not want to see me locked up.

I am following procedures in a decent way, relying on the newly appointed Minister to do what is right for the people of Barbados. Sir, I speak to the Honourable Minister on these things and I have spoken to previous Ministers on these things.

Honourable Minister, as you rise to speak, will you address the issue of Kent. What has happened to that identified project by the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I hope that you have a good day and a good weekend.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East will wind up the debate.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, who just spoke clearly, alerted everyone to the fact that he was not in his seat for any part of this debate. If he were in his seat for any part of the debate, he would have realised that this is a debate about staffing for a unit with the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Project. If he thinks that volume is equivalent to commonsense, then he must speak a little louder.

Mr. Chairman, Kent is not part of the Neighbourhood Upgrading Project. Kent is proceeding as originally planned.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Sir, I want to let Honourable Members who spoke on this matter know that we will have every opportunity in the next Session to discuss these matters fully, as we get onto the next phase of the project. I want to thank the former Ministers who would have done some work in the earlier stage of the project, the Honourable Member

for St. James South and the Honourable Member for St. George North, in whose time early work with the Inter-American Development Bank was started. I also want to thank the staff at the Ministry, the Permanent Secretary and the interim Project Coordinator, Miss Hunte, who has done a very fine job from the inception, in bringing the project to this stage, and who for some time has been a team of one in seeking to move this project forward.

Sir, as I said, I will commit to give this Honourable House regular updates in terms of the progress of this project, not only during the pilot phase, but very much beyond.

Mr. Chairman, with that brief commentary, I beg to move that Head 38 stand part.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. G. A. CLARKE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the DEPUTY SPEAKER the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed te Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, the Resolution was read a first and second time and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 12 – TO MOVE THE SECOND READING OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2006

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

Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this is an important matter. I also understand that Honourable Members and yourself may not be interested in a 30 or 40 minute presentation at this hour of the day. If that indication is given, in the winding up we could redress that matter Mr. Deputy Speaker. Sir, I would want to suggest that in the context, where Barbados is looking to strengthen the framework for disaster management in the country, this measure is important, in the context where Barbados is one of the fewer subregional focal points for the disaster response. In the region this is also an important matter. In a context where the threat of the impact of natural disasters has been experienced in most recent years in this new cycle upon which we have entered, this measure is also very important.

Sir, it simply requires an amendment to the Telecommunications Act, which will allow for Barbados to give effect to the Tampere Convention.
5.30 p.m.

This is a Convention which facilitates both bilateral and multilateral arrangements, within the context of which both State parties and non-State parties involved in disaster management, impact and response and medication efforts are allowed to have access, and ready recourse to telecommunications facilities, without reference to what would normally apply in terms of licences, taxes and domestic jurisdiction.

The existing legislation is found at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be insufficient, the existing Telecommunications Act, as well as the Emergency Powers Act, which gives authority to the Cabinet, in certain respects where the Governor-General has made proclamation of a national public emergency.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are simply trying to firm up the legislation and to provide for that enabling environment, whereby Barbados could become fully a participant in the Tampere Convention. We would see in the event that we have to make recourse to external donations of/ or used by external entities of telecommunications capacity to help us to respond in the event of disaster, then we are in a position to do so, without great difficulty.

This Amendment seeks to facilitate that. Perhaps at this stage that is all I would need to submit, in order to engage the interest of Parliament. I ask that Parliament would look with favour on this amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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 Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. R. D. MARSHALL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 were called and passed.

The Schedule became the Schedule to the Bill.

On the motion of Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the DEPUTY SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, seconded by the Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Telecommunications (Amendment) Act, 2006.

ORDER NO. 8 - FINAL APPROPRIATION (2005-2006) BILL, 2006

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: This is a technical matter, which requires the action on the part of the House. The Final Appropriation Bill, every year, as Honourable Members would recall, we would, having passed a number of Supplementaries during the last Financial year, 2005-2006, in accordance with the law, bring those into a Final Appropriation Bill. The recitals to the Bill would explain the purpose and the intent.

I therefore beg to move that this Final Appropriation Bill, be read a second time.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. R. D. MARSHALL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4 were called and passed.

The Schedule became the Schedule to the Bill.

On the motion of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by the Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the DEPUTY SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R. R. FARLEY, seconded by the Hon. Dame Billie MILLER, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Final Appropriation (2005-2006) Act, 2006.
5.40 p.m.

ORDER NO. 10 – (RECOMMITTED)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier in the Sitting, I had proposed the sending of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill to a Select Committee. I am advised by the Clerk of Parliament that for clarity of the record, I did not explicitly indicate the structure of the Committee. I had indicated then that the composition will be six Honourable Members from this Place and five Honourable Members from the Other Place. What I should also have said is that the six Honourable Members will be split, four Members from the Government side and two Members from the Opposition side. As I indicated then, and it still stands now, the membership of This Side would be the Honourable Member for St. George North, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North and the Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have already communicated to the relevant persons, including the substantive Leader of the House and now the Acting Leader of the House, that we do not propose to submit any names for this Joint Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to move the adjournment, but on speaking on the adjournment, I want to thank Honourable Members for their full and active attention to their duties not just today but for the entire Session. It has been an interesting Session. There have been much enthusiasm, some humour and some fire across the aisle from time to time, including today, which helped to keep Honourable Members interested in their duties here as Members of Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank you, not only in your own capacity as Deputy Speaker, but also on the behalf of His Honour the Speaker, who is not with us today. Without our Presiding Officers, we could not proceed too far in these matters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank the Clerks at the Table, the Hansard Reporters and other staff, the security officers, the caterers and all those who help to make our lives much easier and help to facilitate our work here.

Sir, many persons do not understand or appreciate that the summer recess is perhaps not entirely about us because as politicians we continue to work in our constituencies and as Ministers we continue to work because Cabinet meets every week of the year. Sir, if there are 52 weeks in a year, we will meet on at least 51 because on the odd occasion, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day would fall on a Thursday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we do not take a break in the Parliament, the staff of Parliament would not be able to take a break. They have their statutory entitlements to holidays and much of the staff here are so specialise in nature, particularly the reporters and others, that they are not easily replaceable even on a temporary basis, so we will take a break until October 10, 2006.

Sir, speaking on the adjournment, I want to take the opportunity to let Honourable Members be aware that work on the West Wing of Parliament has been progressing quite steadily. I want to thank the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Joint Committee for the Restoration of the West Wing, for the attention they have paid on the behalf of the rest of us to the proceedings at the West Wing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is really at heart a builder. Sir, we will expect that somewhere beyond this Place that we would see even greater works coming from her. She really does enjoy her work. She was responsible for supervising this East Wing renovations and she is supervising the West Wing renovations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members must be aware that work on the West Wing will include the ‘ripping up’ to use a very graphic Bajan expression, of the yard, which means the facility of parking might be either constrained or not possible at some point during the period while we are on recess.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would appreciate that in terms of the least disruptive period to our work here, we would need to dig the yard up and do the necessary re-paving and the laying of certain underground services during the time that Honourable Members are at break. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to apologise to Honourable Members who will be inconvenienced, but I want them to be aware that during that time they may not be able to have the privilege of parking while the work is going on.

Sir, with that I beg to move that, this House be adjourned until Tuesday, October 10, 2006 at 10.00 a.m. in the morning.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in seconding the motion for the adjournment, I want to thank the members of staff and others who have helped us up to this point. I hope that they would enjoy a rest from these parliamentary sessions for the time being and that they would return to their task with renewed vigour and vitality. I also wish all Honourable Members on Both Sides of the House an enjoyable break.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, without being too weighty in my seconding, I want to say to Honourable Members that I believe that the inconvenience of not having parking during the recess will be well worth it because I believe that what is finally going to be available, presuming it will be done on time, will be something of which we can all be extremely proud. I look forward to the recess resuming in October and shortly thereafter being able to see the new facilities in the West Wing.

With those few words, I wish you, along with the Clerks and all other ancillary staff of Parliament, an enjoyable rest and vacation period.

I therefore second the motion for the adjournment.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I too will like to associate myself with the sentiments of Honourable Members. I look forward to seeing all the Honourable Members come back to this Honourable House, completely rejuvenated on October 10, 2006.

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, October 10, 2006 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
5.54 p.m.

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- EDGHILL, His Honour J. M. (Christ Church West Central)**

- ESTWICK, Dr. D. C. (St. Philip West)**
- FARLEY, Hon. R. R. (Christ Church East)**
- FORDE, Hon. Miss. C. Y. Forde (St. Thomas)**
- JONES, Mr. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)**
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