
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2003 – 2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, June 12, 2007.

PRESENT

His Honour I.A. ROETT, G.C.M., B.A., Dip.Ed.
(Speaker)

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON, LL.B.(Hons.) (Leader of
the Opposition)

Hon. Dame B.A. MILLER, D.A., B.C.H., (Senior
Minister and

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

Mr. G.W. PAYNE, Q.C.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip.Ed., J.P. (Minister
of Public Works and Transport)

Hon. R.D. MARSHALL (Chairman of Committees)

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)

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc., J.P. (Minister
of State, Prime Minister's Office)

Hon. N.A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of
Tourism and International Transport)

Hon. A.P. Wood, B.Sc, M.Sc., M.Phil., J.P.
(Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Hon. R.R. FARLEY, B.Sc., J.P. (Minister of
Housing and

Lands)

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE, L.C.P., J.P. (Minister of
State,

Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Hon. J.X. WALCOTT, M.B., B.S., FRCS (Edin.),
J.P.

(Minister of Health)

Mr. R.D. JONES, B.A.(Hons.), M.A.(Ed.), J.P.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL, B.Sc.(Econ.)(Hons.), M.A.

(Public

Finance) (Minister of State, Ministry of Finance)

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, LL.B. (Hons.) L.E.C.,

(Attorney- General and Minister of Home Affairs)

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 led by Rev. Cannon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Minutes of meeting held on
Tuesday, June 05, 2007.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move
that the Minutes so cited be confirmed, subject to any
omissions, observations and/or corrections.

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

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

PAPERS

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded
to lay the following:

1. Annual Report and Financial Statements of the
Transport Board for the year April 1, 2005 to
March 31, 2006.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Barbados Conference Services Limited for the year ended March 31, 1999.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 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. SPEAKER: Government Business is now the Order of the Day. Order No. 6.

ORDER NO. 6 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GUARANTEE BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE OF THE PAYMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL SUM OF 16 866 000 DOLLARS IN THE CURRENCY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND INTEREST THEREON TO BE BORROWED BY CAVES OF BARBADOS LTD. FROM THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK TO UNDERTAKE THE PROJECT

TO REDEVELOP HARRISON'S CAVE.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James South.

Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that the Harrison's Cave (the Cave) is perhaps one of the most beautiful geological formations in the world, and is Barbados' premier physical attraction and visitor attraction, because all of the visitor attractions are neither not natural, nor are all natural attractions visited by those who are tourists. It also attracts large numbers of residents, many years after it was opened.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that a previous Barbados Labour Party administration had the opportunity to be involved in the development and opening of the Cave. At that time, it was anticipated that approximately 100 000 people would visit the Cave every year.

The reality is however that almost within three months of the opening of the Cave and certainly within the first year, the Cave realised the projected numbers of 100 000 visitors and surpassed that sum by far, by receiving as many as 190 000 every year.

Therefore, within a year of the Cave being opened, it was doubling the numbers of people whom it had been projecting would visit the Cave. It was very gratifying that over the years, many Barbadians and their families, even Barbadians coming home to visit have gone to see the Cave, and many of them are repeat visitors.

In fact, Sir, it is a matter of great pride for us and some satisfaction and a sense of achievement that last year, the Harrison's Cave was awarded one of the BTA's top awards in the Annual Ministry of Tourism Awards. This is an indication of the quality of the product we have been able to develop over the years.

Sir, because of the popularity of the Cave, immediately after development of the infrastructure supporting the Cave, it was inadequate to deal with the numbers, since the numbers had more than doubled the anticipated projection. Therefore, for many years there continued to be challenges, especially when the Cave was at its most popular and, certainly, during Winter Seasons there are difficulties with handling the numbers. The visitor reception area was really very small and the restaurant provided for refreshment was also quite small.

Incrementally, Government made adjustments to improve the quality of the facility, trying to upgrade the restaurant and physical facilities. Approximately two years ago, there was a complete refurbishment of the bathrooms, improvements of the little shop, which sells souvenirs and revenue generating items such as caps, T-shirts and memorabilia.

Sir, therefore some attempt has been made but part of the difficulty that we have had is the fact that this was a facility that was opened to which people were continuing to come every day and there was very high demand, so that at some point, if the complete refurbishment was to be done, we would have to bite the bullet and obtaining the necessary financing and close the Cave, in order to allow a complete physical redevelopment.

A project was started, Sir, for us to review the facilities of the Cave and to determine if we would open other caverns, because the caverns that are developed are not the only ones that exist and which are of enormous beauty and would have appeal to the public. We had to do a cost benefit analysis, vis-à-vis the cost of opening these new caverns, the environmental and economical impact on the Cave's ecosystem as a whole, as well as the revenues that would be generated by having additional caverns.

House 137, sequence 03, 10:30:14

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Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: It was determined that we should not attempt at this time to open new caverns that they may not be worth it financially and that they may in fact expose the Cave..., because of the way in which the Cave breathes. Mr. Speaker, I use the word breathe very loosely because I am not a scientist but I think that the Chamber understands the import of my meaning.

Harrison's Cave is a precious and delicate ecological system for which a particular balance has to be maintained. In the past, one of the things that we have had to consider and address is the degree of pollution in the Cave. In its natural state, the Cave would not be subject to large numbers of people going into it and to the influx of carbon dioxide and other gases associated with the man-based activities.

Mr. Speaker, preserving the quality of the environment at the Cave has been an issue of significance for us. In addition to that, there was some degree of pollution affecting the Cave, because, it is an underground cavern into which toxins from around would drain, and therefore at some stage there was a staining of the stalactites and stalagmites. Clearly, the Cave was showing a high degree of stress and we had to take a decision to close it for a short time. We closed for about a month, rested it, did some reparatory work and tried to ensure that the Cave ecosystem was preserved and was not under any degree of unnecessary stress that could not be managed.

Mr. Speaker, the time came when we determined that some redevelopment of the Cave was necessary. We would have to look at a way of managing the infrastructural development, creating facilities that justified the revenues that reflected a modern facility, a facility not any more 30 years old, that would allow people to use the Cave in a more comfortable way. For instance, one of the challenges we were having is the fact that the car park at the Cave, because it was not intended to cater to such large numbers, was really quite small, and very frequently, when there was an overflow of visitors who themselves had driven and a number of taxis and tour buses, there was a tremendous amount of congestion on the floor of the valley.

Mr. Speaker, those of us who have been to Cave - I believe that everybody in here has, but there are persons outside of the Chamber who may not have - would know that there is a natural entrance and a manmade entrance to the Cave, where the reception facilities are located on the floor of a valley and there are difficulties associating with access and egress and so on. Therefore, a determination was made that we would embark on a number of studies to determine what work needed to be done at the Cave, what beneficial impacts there would be from this work, the cost of a redevelopment programme which was environmentally and ecologically sensitive, which would reflect a modern tourism product, which would improve the physical

facilities and upgrade them to world class standards and re-brand the product in a way that would do the country justice and would make our citizens proud.

Mr. Speaker, the preliminary studies have all been concluded and the actual work of redeveloping the physical facility of Harrison's Cave has started. I have indicated that we are not opening any new caverns, that what we are doing is a physical upgrade.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of the redevelopment of the Cave has been put at BDS\$33.73 million. Mr. Speaker, I am going to give you in detail the cost of the project, if the Chamber would just permit me to turn the requisite page here so that I could be accurate because sometimes if you give a figure off the top of your head and you are \$1 000 out, somebody tries to say that you are misleading people. The cost for the redevelopment of the Cave constitutes many components:

1. A capital works programme at \$27 126 000 008;
2. Issues relative to the operations at \$4.4 million;
3. Furniture and equipment would have to be bought, and that is \$400 000; and
4. Issues of severance, which amounted to \$1 150 000 000.

Mr. Speaker, I would talk about the human resource issues later on. Mr. Speaker, under the Severance Payments Act, if you cannot provide your employee with work for a period of 13 weeks or more - I do not have the legislation in front of me, I am speaking from memory - then the law deems that person to be severed and you are required to pay them severance. Sir, because the Cave was closing for more than 13 weeks to allow the physical redevelopment, and because those persons could not be accommodated elsewhere having been employees of the Caves of Barbados with functions specific to that facility, we were compelled by law to pay those persons severance, which amounted to \$1 150 000 000.

Mr. Speaker, the total sum here is \$31 984 000 387. The difference between the \$31 million and the \$33 million is made up of contingency cost, which is consistent with projects of this type. Mr. Speaker, in large scale physical projects, you always have to put in a contingency sum. There are also charges for servicing the loan commitment, and I would give you details of what the loan commitment are during the course of my comments this morning.

Mr. Speaker, when it was determined that the work would be done and a project had been conceptualised and was ready, the matter was put out for tender. Sir, since we were using loan funding or seeking loan funding from the Caribbean Development Bank, we were obligated to use Caribbean Development Bank procurement procedures,

which are consistent with international finance institutions loan policies.

Sir, when you are borrowing money from an institution, whatever the national procurement rules are, you must follow the terms of the procurement rules of the loan institution. Sir, in this instance, we followed the procurement rules of the Caribbean Development Bank, the loan institution, which meant that the tender for the construction had to be opened to all Caribbean Development Bank constituent member countries, not only Barbadians. We opened up the project and in the end the only companies which qualified, using the Caribbean Development Bank procurement rules, were Chinese companies. Mr. Speaker, China is a member country of the Caribbean Development Bank.

I am giving the details, Sir, because this is the reality today of the globalised environment in which we exist. When we use the procurement rules of particular institutions, we are compelled to open it up to contractors from their member countries, and in this case the Chinese were the only people expressing an interest and qualifying. Ultimately, there were two Chinese companies against whom we had to evaluate and make a decision. Mr. Speaker, one of the companies won the tender and is in fact executing the works today. Mr. Speaker, China State Corporation is the company which eventually won the tender.

House 137 Sequence 4

10.40 a.m.

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Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to pause here and say that there are local companies which have the capacity to do this work but they did not tender. Furthermore, Barbados is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank and therefore, some of our companies would be eligible to take up contracts throughout the region, but in many instances, large companies with the institutional capacity and the appropriate financing structure to qualify as contractors do not tender on these projects. Sir, that was the tragedy with which we were faced with the Harrison's Cave Redevelopment Programme.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish to encourage our companies in this era of globalisation, now that there is the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, that they need to be aggressive in the pursuit of business. They need to penetrate other markets with the skill sets which they have. A lot of work is going on in the Eastern Caribbean and not enough Barbadian companies are tendering, even though they would qualify. Sir, we are a member country of the

Caribbean Development Bank, and even though the loan funding would be coming from elsewhere, or sometimes where State funding would be provided, a lot of our companies are not showing a sufficient entrepreneurial spirit for the kind of opportunity now existing in the global market, even though they have the institutional capacity to do the work. Sir, I was gravely disappointed when none of the companies throughout the Caribbean bid and were able to prequalify for this project.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to optimise the opportunities of the new marketplace, we must meet the standards required by the financial institutions, and some of our companies can do so. In fact, I would suggest that the time has come for strategic partnerships. Sir, black companies in particular in Barbados, do not have enough strategic linkages and often where a company on its own might not be able to qualify for a project, because it does not have the institutional capacity to execute it, if it is partnered with another local entity, it would, in fact, qualify and would be able to get the work done.

Sir, this is an important consideration to lift the profile of Barbados; to establish us as a competitor in the global marketplace; to show the Barbados brand as a standard of excellence; and to ensure regional and international penetration by Barbadian companies, as well as to earn foreign exchange, which would be repatriated to the Barbadian society and economy and allow us to have further growth and benefits. This is very important.

Sir, we criticise a certain Caribbean company, for which I hold no beef, but the companies in that country are aggressive and are leaving their shores and going into the rest of the Caribbean. Sir, we have a strong dollar, we have many skills and financial resources that we could and should be doing the same. I really would wish to encourage our Barbadians enterprises to do the same. We have become characterised by a private sector that has a high capital but is spending money on the distributive and retail sectors, rather than showing any real entrepreneurial spirit. It is a very conservative risk-free way of doing business, and business is not meant to be like that.

Sir, too few of our companies that have the capital base, are seriously making any encouragement outside of Barbados, and taking the risk associated with business growth and development. We are losing our entrepreneurial spirit. It is the microbusinesses in many instances, that do not have capital base, that are showing a higher level of innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and enterprise generally, than the large businesses with capital. Therefore, our business sector needs to shake up and to take a different approach. It needs to stop being so risk-averse and to stop investing in supermarkets enterprises or retail trade.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come, with the international marketplace as it is, for serious investment approaches to be taken by the Barbadian business sector. Mr. Speaker, I applaud those persons who are maximising business opportunities and are moving outside of Barbados, but the number is far too small, in an opportunity-rich market.

Mr. Speaker, we so found ourselves in a position, where the companies that tendered and met the qualification criteria, were the ones we had to consider, and China State Corporation won the bid. I should make the point as well, that part of the redevelopment of the Cave's product involves the delivery of six new trams, some of which are already on the island. Sir, the cost of the new trams was \$12.5 million. I believe they have been showcased in the media; some people would have gone to see them; they are really new and state-of-the-art; they are purpose-built; they are environmentally-friendly; they are modern transport vehicles which fit with the new product, which we are attempting to brand.

Mr. Speaker, what would the physical facilities constitute? I have already made the point that we are redeveloping those physical facilities and that is, in fact, the thrust of the project. I would now wish to give members of the public and this House, the constituent elements of that project. You would recall that we opened for Cricket World Cup, 2007. I took the view that it was an opportunity to test our staff. It was also an opportunity to earn some revenues. I also believed strongly that as the principal visitor attraction and as a facility that is so popular and speaks so well for itself, we could not have such large numbers of people on island and not have the Caves opened for them to see because that would have been a lost of a marketing opportunity. As you know, word of mouth is the most powerful form of marketing.

Sir, I am happy to report to this Honourable Chamber that the experiment of opening for Cricket World Cup, 2007, was an extremely positive and successful one. It gave us an opportunity to test some of our new systems; to showcase some of the available facilities; to give our staff a dry run in the new operating procedures; and to earn revenues, even though that was not the principal reason for opening, at that time.

Mr. Speaker, as consistent with any project which is ongoing, there were some challenges but I would have to say that on the whole, the management and staff of the Caves managed those challenges very well. I would also wish to thank the new Board for its support and guidance. Sir, we had large numbers coming to visit the Cave during Cricket World Cup, 2007. We had a full house every day the Cave was opened and so it was a successful experiment and therefore we look forward to the final opening.

Mr. Speaker, part of the challenges we have had with the old Cave is that the reception area was far too small. Once there were approximately 10 or 20 persons in that area, literally a tram load, it became hot, cramped and uncomfortable and there was no where for persons to go.

10.50 a.m.

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Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: What we are doing now is attempting to create a nature trail around the Cave so that visitors who come - I mean visitors to the Cave, not tourists because people may think that you are focusing on non-nationals - have options available to them, one of which is to go on a nature trail walk or a nature hike before they go into the Cave and to see the flora and fauna of the area along an interpretive trail. There are tourists who enjoy the environmental and the green experience and will greatly enjoy that addition to the Cave experience so that they can look at some of the geological formations as well in the area out of which the Cave was formed.

Mr. Speaker, the second option is that there is a larger facility for reception of visitors, which will now hold approximately 150 people from the 30 which it held before. Sir, we are talking about a much larger space available for use by the public. Mr. Speaker, in the reception area and off the reception area, there will be a number of other activities, exhibits to view, interpretative information, a visual presentation and other activities in which people can be involved, according to their various interest. There may be those individuals who do not want to take the nature trail but who would want the opportunity to view the exhibits, to see the film, to be involved in some of the other preliminary activities and would welcome the choice.

Mr. Speaker, the restaurant is also being extended so that persons can sit and have refreshment while they wait, if that is their pleasure, rather than being involved in these activities because you may find a couple or a family who wants to be by themselves prior to going into the Cave.

Mr. Speaker, the new visitor centre will be 15 414 square feet or 1 420 square metres, which is a good size space. Sir, physically challenged visitors will find that they have absolutely no difficulty accessing the facility. Sir, wheelchairs will be readily accessible and other facilities for the physically challenged are part of the redeveloped physical scape of the Cave.

Mr. Speaker, a restaurant and bar with seating for 150 people, which also makes the restaurant available for private functions, if the Cave were not opened on a Saturday or Sunday evening and you wanted to bring a family to lunch or have a private function or a wedding reception, the restaurant and the facilities could be made available to groups for private activity.

Mr. Speaker, there will be a grand atrium or exhibition space. The offices of the Cave, which were grossly inadequate as the Cave expanded and the staff grew, are being increased to accommodate management, accounts, marketing and other general staff. In addition, there will be souvenir shops, retail space and an amphitheatre, all included in the package. Sir, the amphitheatre, along with the restaurant, makes the facility more marketable as a multi-purpose facility rather than just the visitor attraction of the Cave. The amphitheatre could be used for shows, concerts, private functions, meetings and a range of activity and the restaurant facility will be there to give support.

Mr. Speaker, we anticipate that revenues at the Cave would be generated not only by the shops, memorabilia, souvenirs and so on to be sold but that revenues would be generated by making facilities available for private use. In fact, there are many people who would welcome the opportunity to have a facility of this sort available outside of the hustle and bustle of Bridgetown and in a setting like the Cave. Sir, it is really somewhere that people will welcome to come.

Mr. Speaker, storing the trams is something that had to be given consideration. An environment suitable for storage and maintenance of the trams in their pristine condition has been planned for, so that the storage area for the trams would now be just under 6 000 square feet and will be located on the cliff top. Sir, when you come into the Cave, you pass through Allen View, then come around the big corner and then there is a descent onto the valley floor. The area for the tram storage is in that corner, on the cliff top and then the visitor facility and other facilities are on the floor of the Cave. What we have tried to do is to better use the physical lands and the space around the Cave so that you have a much more spread out, more comfortable space because the valley floor itself, could not accommodate the kind of expansion that we had anticipated.

Mr. Speaker, also on the cliff top will be many of the engineering and technical facilities including a compressor room, a solar inverter room - we are going to be using solar energy and we are already powering the Cave by solar energy and will be adding to that but, Sir, I will speak to that later on - a switch gear room, trams storage space, tyres and spare parts as well as offices, washrooms and lunchrooms for the operation staff.

Mr. Speaker, to enhance the visitor experience and to keep you in a nature-based environment even when you are in the Cave, an elevator is going to be used to connect the facilities, which is going to be an open front, glass elevator, which allows a view of the surrounding facilities and takes in the scenery and this will provide access to the valley floor. There will be a Cave interpretive centre, which will make provision for a multimedia presentation and the room where this will be held will accommodate 40 people at a time. There will be an upper floor, above the multimedia gallery for staff, a passenger boarding area, staff washrooms and for a sculptor to work on site. We anticipate that person would be a local sculptor and that would have some appeal to the public.

Mr. Speaker, I have already spoken about the increase in the parking. The parking facilities would now accommodate 114 vehicles and there would be special parking bays reserved for the disabled and would provide space for taxis, staff, tour buses and private vehicles. We sought too, as part of the project, to improve the internal cave works like ventilation, drainage, electrical, lighting, speleology and emergency exits. Mr. Speaker, for many years, the Cave had operated without a (GEED) Government Electrical Engineering Department approval certificate, which all houses and other facilities in Barbados are required to have. Sir, I was appalled when I found out, as Minister, and we were able to address that and bring the Cave into compliance with the laws that everybody else had to observe.

H137/11:00

Sequence 6

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, the upgrading of lighting is one of the things that we sought to do. Sir, people already know that the lighting in the Cave is triggered by motion and photovoltaic activity. That is one of the ways in which we conserve energy at the Cave.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, there are some external works. I mentioned earlier that we are going to have restaurant, shops and other facilities. I also indicated that the restaurant would be put out for tender. There would be a souvenir shop, with related memorabilia and so on.

Sir, I spoke about the fact that we will have a Sculptor present at the site, selling his goods and plying his craft, so that persons who are interested in obtaining gifts and souvenirs of that sort can do so. Part of what we have sought to do is to ensure that the project is developed and there is integration of the surrounding residential community. In that regard, a number of kiosks will be developed and made available for the exclusive use and

benefit of residents of the area, so that rather than have people come in from outside and derive the economic benefits, pass through the village and just leave them, we are developing facilities, which would allow these people to derive incomes and revenues from the activities of the Cave, and the kiosks are for them. They will not be put out to tender, to people outside of the community.

Sir, we are conscious of the fact, if we are to build good relations with communities, we cannot have these multi-million dollar facilities in the center of residential communities and alienate the residents from the activity, as well as the incomes to be made from these activities. Sir, Government, therefore, in this redevelopment of the Cave is committing resources to ensuring that the community derives economic benefit from the activity.

Sir, the loan, and the figure was given earlier, is repayable over seventeen years at a rate of 6.25 per cent. Those are the terms of the loan from the Caribbean Development Bank.

Mr. Speaker, earlier, I spoke and alluded to the use solar and so on. I would wish to take the opportunity to elaborate on that. In the last Financial and Economic Statement, which people commonly refer to as the Budget. Sir, being a Bajan, I too would refer to it as the Budget, even though the economists say that is not the correct language, but Bajan are accustomed calling that presentation the Budget, and I am going to continue to refer to it as the Budget. Sir, as a lawyer, I do not have to use the strict and precise language and terms of art of the economist.

Mr. Speaker, in the last Budget, the Prime Minister enunciated a number of green principles under the term Green Economy, and indicated that the public would receive benefits for retrofitting their homes, tax rebates of \$5 000 and hotels would receive up to 150 per cent of their investments - these are not sums to be scoffed at, \$5 000 for the green fitting of houses- and he indicated the criteria. Hotels which retrofitted with green would receive 150 per cent of their investment, and so on.

Sir, it is not widely known, because people hear what they wish to hear, even though we have spoken about it repeatedly, that the Cave and the Environmental Special Projects Unit, at Sturges, now renamed and given a new policy direction as the National Heritage Department, has for a long time used photovoltaic solar energy and green principles as their standard operating procedures. In fact, at the Cave, we were very careful in our planning to ensure - I was very clear on this, very keen to see it done - that these three principles were incorporated.

In this regard, a number of energy efficient technologies and approaches will be applied for the saving

of energy costs. I have already spoken to the fact of persons who have been to the Cave know that the lights in the Cave are triggered only as you arrive at certain points. The lights do not remain on all the time. That is an energy efficient approach. There are several others that will be applied in the redeveloped Cave.

In addition, water will be recycled, so that there is no wastage of water. There will be the reuse of water for irrigation and secondary and tertiary purposes. Mechanisms are being developed for proper storm water drainage. This is important because it has been determined that one of the challenges in relation to managing the Cave and preserving the environment, is the issue of the drainage of water from farming and other activities, and generally during high rainfall periods, causing chemicals and other nutrients, that you do not want in the environment, to enter. Sir, stormwater drainage is an issue which has to be addressed if we are to keep the Cave in pristine condition and preserve that special ecosystem.

Sir, there is going to be buffer space around the Cave to reduce the impact of man-based activities. The cave runs under a number of residences and so on, and all of the activity which takes place up there. There is a high degree of illegal dumping in the Jack-in-the-Box and other gullies, which drain into the cave's eco system.

Sir, I have been with the police touring the area, showing them the nature of the problem that we have, the high degree of dumping. You would be amazed, everything from stoves, toilets and dead animals, it really is horrendous, the level of dumping. I would wish to make the point that there is some evidence that they are persons living in the area who are dumping, but by far, the preponderance of the evidence is that people come with large vehicles from outside and dump illegally into the community and into the drainage area. This puts our drinking water at risk from car batteries with lead, and other harmful chemicals.

Mr. Speaker, I was appalled and the police were stunned when they saw the kinds of things that were being dumped illegally in the area. It puts the Harrison's Cave ecosystem at risk, because of all the things that are being drained into it, which can stain the stalactites and stalagmites, pollute the water and the air quality and put the whole project at risk. Sir, since the St. Thomas area is an important drainage area for water in Barbados generally, and is part of the area through which water that we drink, and finds its way into the aquifers percolates, having these dangerous chemicals and alien substances in the environment is, in fact, a considerable risk.

Sir, that issue of drainage has to be dealt with, but I would wish to call on the police to deal with the issue of environmental crimes in Barbados. There is no shortage of

them. Illegal dumping is at an all-time high. People are now dumping yards away from the landfill, rather than driving to the landfill.

11.10 a.m.

Sequence 7

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

House 137, Sequence 08, 11.10 a.m.

Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON: They go to Harrison's Cave and the Jack-in-the-Box Gully and dump in there, which is not far away from the Mangrove Landfill. They also dump in quarries and in residential communities. There is a level of indiscipline and illegal dumping, and what is annoying about it, is that a lot of the people who are dumping illegally, are being paid to take their waste to the landfill.

Sir, this is a matter which the police have to address with seriousness. They have to monitor some of the illegal dump sites and they have to send a signal to the public of zero tolerance for this activity.

Asides.

Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON: It is going to cause a serious health risk in Barbados. It is going to cause contamination of water in Barbados, sooner or later, if this is kept up. It is a very serious matter. I know that the police are very busy but I really want to appeal to them again. I have written to them. I have spoken to them. I have appealed to them publicly. I have taken them to illegal dump sites, and we still cannot get any serious response to the issue of environmental crimes in Barbados. These activities go on unabated, putting the community at risk.

As I said, sooner or later, our drinking water is going to end up being contaminated by something that somebody has dumped in large quantities somewhere. I do not mean to be a prophet of doom or gloom. I have simply, given my responsibility for this portfolio, sounding the warning that a few selfish persons are putting the community at risk.

Commensurate with the development of the Cave, has been a planning policy, which has caused an area around the Cave to be designated as the Zone of Special Environmental Control (ZSEC). This designation has resulted in a limit on the kinds of activities that can take place. If you have a house, you can improve it, but you could not build apartments for commercial exploitation. People sometimes think that it stops you from building a house or it stops you from improving a house that you have currently. In some areas, there is a limit on the building, but it does not stop you from upgrading. If you have a wooden

house that is in bad condition or if you have an outside toilet and you want to convert, that is quite permissible.

In addition, there is a neighbourhood upgrading programme that has been negotiated with the IDB, which will have road improvements, physical improvement of the areas, and deals with issues in relation to sanitary conditions, such as improvement of facilities from pit toilets to water toilets, upgrading of housing and so on. This has been discussed with the residents, and the community will benefit from that project, as part of the setoff of the zonal restrictions which exist.

There have been relatively positive responses from the community, but as you would appreciate, Sir, not everyone is happy with some degree of restriction. Further, the Natural Heritage Department, formerly known as the Environmental Special Projects Unit, under the leadership of Steve Devonish and Rosene Reed, has sought to develop a number of community-based activities, to integrate the surrounding community into nature-based activities, from which they could benefit. Sir, what they have essentially done is unique.

In very much the same way that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has developed the Pine as a zone of cultural significance in Barbados, the ESPU/NHD has developed this area as a zone of special community and natural heritage significance.

I have spoken already about the Kiosks that would be of the benefit of the community but the public must be aware of "De Heart ah Barbados" Programme, which is a heritage programme and take place every year, involving a range of cultural activities all across this area. This is really the centre of Barbados and the heart of Barbados, insofar as it is where salt-of-the-earth Barbadians live, who still observe traditional ways of life and traditional cultural Barbadian values.

They have a strong heritage programme going. There is now an internationally recognised 10K run and 5K walk, which are part of the community-based activities that have been developed.

The Youth Path Movement has included the training of a number of young people in tourism and natural heritage activities, teaching them how to derive revenues and incomes from nature-based tourism, which is a thrust that Barbadians need to make. In fact, The Youth Path Programme with the young people of the area has been so successful that it has been recognised by UNESCO and received an international award for what it has attempted to do there.

The Natural Heritage Unit also adopted the Holy Innocents Primary School and that has proven to be a very

useful collaboration for the benefit of the school, involving a camp, and other activities from which the school has benefited.

We have also extended sponsorship to the Welchman Hall Unity Group and as part of the project. Improvements have been agreed for Allen View, Sturges to Holy Innocents for upgrading the road, and the construction of sidewalks in and around this area.

It is important and I will stress to the management and Chairman and Board of the Cave that for a mature tourism product, it is time now for us to have our own signature souvenirs. If you go to any Cathedral in London, they have a small shop, 6 feet by 6 feet, packed with shelves that you could buy paper weights, key rings and all kinds of souvenirs and memorabilia.

It is sad and I have repeatedly spoken to our own management and staff and Boards about this, that facilities like Farley Hill and Harrison's Cave must have a souvenir line. I am not talking about T-shirts, which are easy to do. I am talking about ash trays, paper weights, key rings, table mats, place mats, tea towels, things that people can use as gifts, buy and give to others and use themselves. We really have been very weak on our marketing thrust, in this regard. It is time now that these products should come on stream, and add to the revenue generation of these facilities.

I hope that I would soon be able to inform the Chamber that my words are not falling entirely on stony ground and are bearing fruit in their season.

House 137, sequence 08, 11:20:14

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Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: To facilitate the developments, there have had to be a number of land acquisitions in the area for the establishment of landscaped vegetated buffers; for the environmental management of the Cave's natural entrance; and for the provision of ventilation shafts for the Cave. There have been some acquisitions, some licences and leases which we would have to take in respect of properties in the area. Therefore, there are a number of people who are due compensations for works that have been done.

In many instances, I think that all of the residents, who have properties that would in some way be used either partially or in full, have been contacted by the National Heritage Department, the Ministry of Housing and Lands and by the Land Surveyors Department. They are all represented by attorneys-at-law in Barbados, who have either negotiated and completed negotiations or with whom negotiations are taking place, who are seeking to ensure

that they have the possible financial arrangement and outcome. Mr. Speaker, there was one particular property which was critical to our access for the project. I believe that process is now completed or just about completed. The attorney-at-law is concluding arrangements with the Ministry of Housing and Lands on the person's behalf.

In addition to that, one of the things that we are seeking to create is linkages with other sites in the district. Close to the Harrison's Cave, there is the Jack-in-the-Box Gully, the Welchman Hall Gully and the Flower Forest. We are also in discussions with the other facility, I do not remember the name of it.

Mr. Speaker, discussions are ongoing, so that a person who has an interest in a nature-based package could get a single ticket which would allow them to visit all of the facilities rather than just visit a single one, which would save them some money. Sir, selling the tickets as a package guarantees income and throughput for the various facilities in the area. It is one of the unique public/private sector collaborations that is ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, I expect that is going to have some degree of success and popularity not only with the owners and management of the facilities but with the public as well. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that these tickets are also available to members of the Barbadian public. It is not something which is being marketed exclusively to the tourism market, it is available for anybody who wants to benefit from it.

Mr. Speaker, as I turn towards the home stretch, I would not say in conclusion, I would want to look at the issue of staffing. I want to thank our staff for the cooperation that they have given us in the development of this project. When the facility was closed, we had to make arrangements for the continued payment of salaries, wages, PAYE and national insurance contributions of a number of staff members, some of whom then went on to work with other facilities, Cricket World Cup, the National Conservation Commission and others, as a holding arrangement. Others did not get placed in the same way.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that we made a conscious effort that we were going to keep those people whom we were not compelled by law to sever, they have remained on staff being paid.

Mr. Speaker, there is the question of the preparation work of taking the product to the next level; determining the appropriate management structure for the Cave; determining the appropriate systems to carry the Cave; dealing with issues relative to management and operation of the new facilities and the recruitment of the staff necessary.

Mr. Speaker, there would be, as I indicated earlier, a lot of new hi-tech facilities and equipment associated with the Cave, which is going to require us to have a cadre of highly trained engineers, environmentalists and people with specialist skills at the facility if it is to be run in the way that the project development contemplates. Sir, the planning process for the recruitment, for the hiring, for the placement of the specialists who would be involved in the management of the Cave have now got to take place. Sir, we are still at the stage where we are doing that preparatory work for an opening in November of this year.

Mr. Speaker, while the Cave was closed, we tried, as far as was possible, to train staff. Prior to its opening, we would train staff in personal development; customer service and business etiquette; computer applications; cave formations; first aid; orientation; occupational health and safety; cave emergency rescue response; cave rescue; interpretation; conversational French and Spanish; practical supervisory management; basic security procedures; landscaping; identification of flora and fauna; and electronics and mechanics.

Mr. Speaker, some persons would also receive overseas postings at similar facilities, although we conceived that Harrison's Cave ecosystem has a certain uniqueness. Sir, insofar as it is possible, we would place persons at facilities overseas.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to manage the Cave properly, the language skills to which I alluded and the strong technical skills would be of extreme importance. In addition, we cannot upgrade the Cave and improve the facilities without ensuring that our staff is trained to world class level and that they feel part of the newness and the freshness of the facility.

Mr. Speaker, it would be wrong for us to reopen the Cave without our taking our staff through that orientation and training process to match them with the quality of the physical facilities and to ensure them a path for continuous personal and career development. In fact, that is what the training programmes and the human resource programmes are intended to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish to thank the architects, the Director of the National Heritage Department, who have carried this project and brought it to where it is now, and the manager and the staff of the Cave for the work that has been done to date. I also want to thank all Boards, which have been involved in the management and direction of the Cave and the redevelopment process and to urge them now to again bend their backs to the task of developing the appropriate structure and the appropriate environment for the Cave to go forward as a new and world class facility.

Mr. Speaker, Government has already committed \$33 million to this process. We want to thank the staff for their cooperation to date. We look forward to the reopening in November. We anticipate, once our training is completed and the new management systems and structures and staff are put in place, to once again be able to attract the attention of the Barbados Tourism Authority and other awarding agencies, as we seek to reach new heights of excellence.

House 137 Sequence 9

11.30 a.m.

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Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this Bill to this Honourable Chamber today, as being worthy of this Honourable Chamber's support because of the necessary and important work to be undertaken at the Cave and which will continue to ensure that the Cave remain part of the national heritage of our country and a facility of which we can all be proud.

Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, the matter before us this morning would not generate any hostility from this side, maybe what it would generate might be some questions. Sir, as a major tourist country, we are conscious that we have to ensure that both manmade and natural places of attraction would be maintained in pristine condition, so that all persons visiting those facilities, would feel some level of comfort. In fact, we have to ensure that those persons would enjoy those places, for which they would have paid their money to visit.

Therefore, one of the wonders of the world, which is captured in St. Thomas and referred to as Harrison's Cave, is deserving of the kind of upkeep and redevelopment that we have heard about from the Honourable Minister this morning. What might be sad is that sometimes it takes too long for structures such as this one, to get the kind of development or maintenance that should be obtained over time.

I remember, some time in 2002/2003, there was talk of the redevelopment of Harrison's Cave, and if one were to look at the financial statement of Harrisons Cave during that period, one would see there was a cost of more than \$27 million, for its redevelopment. Today we are talking about slightly under \$34 million, some \$7 million than when the idea was first conceptualised, in 2002/2003. One would hope that the figures, which are put before us this morning, would not see any major change relative to the redevelopment cost of that particular facility.

Sir, the money coming from the Caribbean Development Bank, one would assume to be a relatively soft loan, now carrying the kind of commercial rates that would have hobbled projects in this country in the past.

There are thousands of Barbadians, school children and families, who have trekked from the various parts of Barbados, on numerous occasions, to Harrison's Cave. Sir, one cannot really appreciate the beauty of that infrastructure in St. Thomas, unless one visits on more than one occasion. In fact, I would even suggest unless one visits more than twice. Therefore, even beyond those persons who come to our shores, there are Barbadians, who would go there on several occasions. I have gone to the Caves of Barbados in the past, on several occasions, only to enjoy its beauty, such as the stalactites and stalagmites. I have enjoyed travelling on in those trams, which we are told have been replaced for \$2.5 million. These are purpose-built trams for that particular facility.

Mr. Speaker, there is an area of concern, nevertheless, and even though I hesitate to raise that area of concern, the Minister herself has gone into some lengthy discourse on the need for Barbadian and Caribbean construction entrepreneurs, to become involved in tendering for projects of this type. Sir, in relation to major construction projects taking place in Barbados, there is one group of persons who keeps reoccurring, and that group of persons is those persons from the Asian continent. Sir, Asia with a population of more than one billion people, has a large workforce, and they are spreading right across the Caribbean landscape.

There has been a big debate in this country in relation to another major project. That debate begs the question as to whether those persons have work permits, and one would only hope in this instance this would be the case.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, there is need for some general concerns because of the fact that we have a fragile society. We were speaking of ecosystems and the fragility of ecosystems in St. Thomas, surrounding the Welchman Hall Gully and Harrison's Cave, but our cultural system is also fragile. Sir, I am sure you would understand the fragility of our cultural system, and there are dangers inherent in what happens.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I understand and respect the commentary of the Honourable Member, relative to the procurement procedures. Sir, China is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank. I believe it is a member of the Inter-American Development Bank and a

member of every major financial institution in the world. Therefore, its penetrative power, in relation to projects such as these, is substantially major. Therefore, even though one would want to accept, as a member of the Caribbean Development Bank, that China has a right to spread its wings for major construction projects, there must still, nevertheless, be a warning. Sir, there are persons, and I am not necessarily referring to those persons in the Asian continent, when planting themselves on another country's space, they extend their tentacles and do not move. Therefore, a word of warning to the wise is enough. Those who speak with forked tongues should be warned.

Mr. Speaker, we are also in agreement with the Honourable Minister that issues of pollution relative to the area of...

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order, please. We are not going to have this again today. Let me hear one speaker.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, the nature of agitation seems to be great among some, but I am glad it is not being encouraged. We are speaking in relation to the issue of pollution, not only to the area which is before us, Harrison's Cave, but the Minister was at some pains to point out the extensive nature of pollution in Barbados.

11.40 a.m.

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Mr. R.D. JONES: She spoke of the gully, which is within that particular environ, she spoke of taking the police and surveying the kind of dumping and littering across the length and breadth of Barbados but one has to ask if by simply taking police and asking them to enforce the environmental laws, if that, in fact, could break the back of the kinds of man-made pollution, which we have in Barbados.

We are still encrusted as a society with persons who show no regard whatsoever for other people's space. They keep around their surrounding clean by passing their refuse and garbage onto their neighbour's premises. Sir, it is almost like an inbred pathology of littering, dirtying, nastying someone else's space without recognising that by doing so, you are also polluting yourself because of the nature of Barbadian landscape and the nature of Barbadian space, which we all occupy. Sir, how do we say to the police, who have many other major tasks to deal with, that they have to arrest persons and take them before the court and prosecute them for littering Barbados. Sir, where do we

go, do we not get into the minds of the people? I do not believe enough of that has been done if they are persons who are paid to remove both bulk refuse, sewage and then they do not locate that removal in the particular places so designated, then those persons must be dealt with because they are paid for the carrying out of a particular service. Therefore, if they want to continue to demonstrate their entrepreneurial capabilities, then they must do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, our society has become extremely lax, almost encouraging people to do those things which are wrong. Therefore, we have to change that and find ways and means of ensuring that the changes take place. Therefore, we are in synch with the Minister on this particular idea and to encourage Barbadians to see this country as possibly the best country on the face of God's earth. We do not only want to maintain that relative to how people live with each other but the physical space of Barbados must be protected, preserved and maintained, not only for ourselves but for future generations of Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, if there is a national environmental policy and plan in this country, we would need to dust it off, make it vigorous and active. If there is none, then there is need for a national environmental policy and plan for Barbados and a policy and plan which gets into the hearts and minds of every single Barbadian. Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the cataclysmic nature of pollution, climate change, degradation of our land; degradation of our seas and our gullies, our water catchment areas, one almost trembles because the image which one conjures up and or the image which is presented to one, creates the kind of fear that should be embodied in each and every person in Barbados and across the globe and, therefore, we have a lot of work to do.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Honourable Minister loves to speak lofty on such notions and that she would be in the forefront of such policies being planned because it would preserve those areas and spaces that we are talking about in this debate. The Minister also introduced the notion of persons in the area benefiting from such a major investment in St. Thomas. She spoke about the construction of kiosks and other associated facilities to ensure that those residents benefit from sales, whatever are those sales. She also spoke of the development of souvenir shops and the development of various craft and artifacts for sales to those persons who visit Harrison's Cave.

Mr. Speaker, one is hoping that we are not talking about mass produced items coming from China. One is really hoping that is not the case because when you look around Barbados in many of the large and small retail establishments and one is looking for the authentic Barbadian craft, these places are bereft of such crafts. Therefore, there might be a need to strictly develop a

subsector of the tourist attraction by the development of craft related activity by Barbadian craft people to capture that market rather than containers landing on our shores with mass-produce items for retail here in Barbados, because it is merely a commercial activity. One wants to see the creativity of the Barbadian, the innovation of the Barbadian, the entrepreneurial spirit of the Barbadian being imbedded in the kinds of craft that we are talking about that we would want to retail at places leading into Harrison's Cave at the souvenir shops. Mr. Speaker, we believe that is an important area of activity and that it will generate income at the various stage of the development of the particular product and its final retailing but these large containers landing at our port from China and other parts of the world to be retailed in reality makes no sense for a country that really wants to develop and utilise the talent of its people but, Sir, I will speak about that at another time.

Mr. Speaker, there is going to be a lot of room in this Chamber for expansion, exponentially, of such debate and such discourse.

Mr. Speaker, the redevelopment of the Cave and all of the areas spoken to once these things are done on time, would be deserving of the investment, which the Minister has spoken about. One would also believe that the people of Barbados would be pleased in this instance that both the man-made component of the facility and the nature-made component of the facility is in their investment in their country. Therefore, that pleasure could only resonate, if we do not hear about cost overruns; if we do not become frustrated that a project, which is supposed to be completed at a specific time is a year and a year-and-a-half beyond its completion date.

H137/11:50

Sequence 11

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Mr. R.D. JONES: Too many of our major projects have suffered from that. Even though one recognised that there was a dry run, as the Minister said, during Cricket World Cup, and even though she was at a little pain, to point out that the revenue generated during that opening phase for Cricket World Cup was not her major concern, at the time, for any project that is opening or reopened to generate money, we would have liked to know how much money was made by the Caves of Barbados Limited during that reopening. Sir, it is all well and good to talk about dry run and an uncompleted project, but did we make \$100 000 or \$500 000 during the Cricket World Cup phase? This kind of information is important to the society.

Sir, I believe that when the Honourable Minister wraps up, she would be able to tell us, whether during that

preliminary reopening during Cricket World Cup, we made some money from the operation of that facility, that would help in the operational management of that place.

Sir, the residents of that area, those persons who live in that area, will benefit in a major way. The Minister said that persons can upgrade their facilities. That was of some concern to us. I am glad that the Minister has allayed the fears of persons in that particular area of Barbados, where they can upgrade their homes, there would be proper sewerage disposal and things of this ilk, to ensure that those persons do not feel disadvantaged, as a result of such a major facility in their midst.

Sir, we heard of the special zone of control, that has now been introduced in this Chamber, even though the Minister was at a loss, but she did give us information, and we are pleased that the area is a zone of special environmental control. I believe that is what the Minister stated. Mr. Speaker, there are other areas of Barbados such as the Graeme Hall area, which should be so designated, if it has not been, a zone of special environmental concern and control. We do not have many wetlands in Barbados. Therefore, there might be extensions of that particular philosophy which...

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of elucidation. The Honourable Member is making a point of the Graeme Hall designation. For the benefit of the Chamber, I wish to inform Honourable Members that with the effort of the Ministry of the Energy and Environment, our Environment Unit in particular, the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary has, in fact, been designated under the United Nations system as a Ramsar site, which makes it an area of special recognition as a wetland, eligible for funding, special treatment and ecological recognition and significance. I do not propose to speak to it in my winding up, but I thought that at this point it would be useful to alert the Chamber, since the Honourable Member raised it.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Sir, that is the kind of information one would like to have at their finger tips. Therefore, I am pleased that the Minister has, in fact, brought the Chamber up to date. Therefore, with that kind of Ramsar designation, there would not be any unnecessary incursions into that area for any kind of manmade facility, of any type whatsoever. Sir, we are pleased that the Minister is taking her work very seriously, and would stand in the vanguard for the protection of the environmental spaces across Barbados, wherever they are. Sir, not only the areas around Harrison's Cave, Welchman Hall Gully or Jack-in-the-Box Gully.

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: on a point of elucidation. The Honourable Member spoke to the Cave being opened during Cricket World Cup. The Cave was opened from April 1st to May 5th, 2007, for Cricket World

Cup, during which time it received 10 759 visitors and earned gross sales of \$353 950.08.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Sir, I have to again give thanks and appreciation. This is a great day. Mr. Speaker, I wonder what you have been doing. I know that you are a Godly man, and you pray often, but this is great. We are getting figures. This is what democracy always demand. This is the kind of transparency that we have been speaking of for some time. This is a nice little turn over for the period of time. I want to compliment and congratulate all those persons associated with the facility, and those who have made the determination that during that period, rather than have a mothball facility, you would have opened it up, even though in a limited way, for persons who are coming to Barbados and Barbadians, to get a feel of the place, and on their return, as part of the Legacy, would bring others to enjoy the benefits of Harrison's Cave.

Sir, as I said, there is no hostility from this side, in relation to maintaining of places such as this, and as a responsible Opposition we can only be supportive of such innovation and ideas, but always with a caveat. I have spoken to those caveats before. Let the project be concluded on budget, within time. As Barbadians would say, those 'bug bearers' that have been haunting us for some period of time, we would want that these things become past memory. One would truly hope that in this instance, as we spend just under \$34 million, we would not hear of \$34 or \$40 million having been spent, relative to that facility. We hope that all of the persons associated with the design of the project, would in fact, strike the nail on the head, and the citizens of Barbados would, in this instance have to their fears allay that we would have another albatross around the taxpayer's necks, relative to the cost.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Hon. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to make a contribution to this debate. I want to start by saying that the same way in which public policy has to be consistent, so too must be criticism.

Sir, I want, in this very short presentation, to bring to bear some understanding of what it is we are engaging. The Government of Barbados is making an investment of \$51 million, in a project where the demand will be shared between local and foreign individuals. I do not have the information regarding the breakdown of that demand, but I could tell you that I would expect, as would have happened, that in the initial stages of the creation of the Harrison's Cave, a lot of locals would have attended to see the sight, because it is natural. Over time, there would have

been a gradual reduction in the way at which locals would view this phenomenon, somewhat. I am just being hypothetical.

12.00 p.m.

Sequence 12

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House 137, Sequence 13, 12.00 p.m.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what I am really seeking to address here this morning is that such an investment has a very foreign component to it because in the future, the demand for this product will come predominantly from visitors to these shores.

Sir, if that is so, it means that to a large extent, the fortunes of Caves of Barbados would reflect the character of our tourism product up ahead. It is evident that a short stay visitor finds the Harrison's Cave a very attractive site to visit during the course of his one-day stop in Barbados. To that extent, Mr. Speaker, even in the absence of data, cruise ship visitors to Barbados find the Harrison's Cave extremely attractive, and it is highly demanded by these individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I do not need to have information to make such a conclusion because it requires us first to understand what it is we are seeking to do, before we can even begin to do it. Therefore, politics has to be intellectualised, and anyone who is seeking to carry this country anywhere had better understand it. I can therefore say that there is a lot of similarity between the investment which we are seeking to make in the Caves of Barbados and an investment in a stadium, which you know cannot be satisfied only through local demand, but there has to be foreign demand as well.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, I do not know where you are going but wherever you are going, Sir, I will now allow that today. I will only hear discussions on this Resolution, please.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, how could you say that when you do not know where I am going? How could you stop me and admit that you do not know where I am going?

Mr. SPEAKER: I am just warning you, Sir.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: I do not understand it, so let me continue. I will ignore the comment not from the point of view that you do not know where I am going, but from the point of view that I intend to go where I am going, so I will continue. Mr. Speaker, let me just continue on my

trend so that, hopefully, you know where I am going, so let me develop my point.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that any investment in the Caves of Barbados has to be analysed from the basis that you can appreciate what benefits it will bring to the country.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is different.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Thank you. I am suggesting that the foreign earning potential and capacity of the Cave is at the heart of the investment, which we are seeking to inject into that Cave. It cannot be disputed because that is why we are investing. It has been recognised and said that it is the prime tourism product in Barbados. It could even be the primary, so I do not mind the crosstalk. Therefore, I am suggesting that its capacity to earn foreign exchange is what is giving rise to the investment that we are seeking to make in this particular project. If that is so, Mr. Speaker, all I am saying is that it is accepted that to invest \$51 million in the Caves of Barbados at this time, is a good investment and this has already been said by the Opposition.

Therefore, the extent to which an investment is good, is not directly related to the amount that you are investing. It is related to the benefits that you intend to derive from the investment. This is the point I was seeking to make earlier. I do not have to call any particular project to make my point. I am simply saying that in this case, Mr. Speaker, it is not the amount of investment but it is the type of investment you are making that will make the difference.

Sir, if that is so, and there is a project that was invested in that, which cost three times as much as the Cave, that would have caused all kinds of talk in Barbados, how it is this investment that seeks to do the same thing to bring foreign exchange earnings to Barbados is not being criticised in a similar vein.

Mr. SPEAKER: Unfortunately, Sir, we are not discussing that project now.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Sir, I do not know to which project you are referring. I am making a fundamental point that if there is an investment, which is three times the amount of this investment that has incurred criticism, why would an investment that seeks to address the same market would not incur the same kind of criticism. I am saying there must be consistency of criticism and consistency of policy.

I do not mind individuals on the other side who do not understand anything about what I am speaking. I do not mind individuals on the other side who would talk about a Ministry of Innovation, without understanding that it is foolishness and rubbish to talk about a Ministry of

Innovation, when in actual fact if there is an innovation, it has to be implemented through some other Ministry. I do not mind individuals on the other side, who never saw it fit to even engage their minds in anything consistent or sensible over the last decade.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, what are you referring to now?

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Individuals on the other side.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am asking you to control yourself, please. We are debating a Resolution, and I have not heard any Member on this side get up to say anything relating to what you are saying, Sir. Please continue.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I am referring to somebody who has been archaic for the longest time, who has not surfaced to understand the realities of life in Barbados, and believes that he is entitled, having come to the surface.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: In fact, he has submerged to the top and believes that he is entitled to the Cave.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I regret not being here last week, and that is the truth, but let me move on to the substantive issue here at hand.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: The Caves of Barbados is an ideal investment, both from the point of view of its physical structure, its product and the ability to promote. Mr. Speaker, now we will speak to this whole question of promotion.

Mr. Speaker, again I heard talk about whether or not a Chinese company should be allowed to bring certain products to sell at the Cave. Sir, even if you encourage Barbadians to use their creative skills to provide products for sale at the Caves of Barbados, why it is that a Chinese company could not be engaged to provide certain types of replicas and other things that could be sold at the Caves of Barbados?

House 137, sequence 13, 12:10:14

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Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: We are importing Japanese cars. We are importing cars from all over the world. In fact, our imports from the rest of the world, not from CARICOM, are 90 per cent of our total imports. Therefore, why would one make reference to whether or not a Chinese company could bring certain products for sale at the Caves of Barbados, unless one speaks to the broader issue. Mr. Speaker, it is minor.

Mr. Speaker, if Chinese companies are allowed to make certain products for sale in Barbados, that cannot be an issue in the context of what is happening in Barbados; that cannot be an issue in the context of the growth of the foreign reserves, which have grown by over \$3 million over the last year; that cannot be an issue with respect to the slowdown that we have seen in the import side of the equation of the economy; that cannot be an issue with respect to the low employment rate that is now private sector driven; that cannot be an issue with respect to the control of the fiscal control of governments over the last fiscal year; that cannot be in respect to the increased disposal income that has been occasioned by the 10 per cent increase in wages across the board in the public service; and that cannot be in respect of the overall performance of the economy, so why would there be a reference to a Chinese company, if it were so, bringing products for sale into Barbados at this time when 90 per cent of our imports come from extra-regional sources.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a reality of life in Barbados that given the present construction boom that would persist for the next five to seven years - I can predict it safely - that there would be, however you look at it, some shortages in Barbados of certain kinds of skills, but I am not here to discuss that. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that this debate requires more understanding of the fundamental issues rather than the raising of cheap political points when you have agreed in principle that it is an investment that is worth its salt even though it is an investment of some \$51 million, not \$15 million.

Mr. Speaker, there has to be acceptance that there is consistency across the board with respect to this investment and other investments that have been made recently. Sir, we all accept that the demand for this product cannot be satisfied and fulfilled by locals alone but would have to be done as well, through visitors to our shore. Sir, there is the consistency of public policy, therefore there must be consistency of Opposition criticism.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if you cannot appreciate and understand fundamentals, that you cannot come and make wild foolish statements about what is going on currently in Barbados, of which this is one.

Mr. Speaker, let me now deal with the capital works, the whole question of the development programme that would enhance the product at the Caves of Barbados. The civil and building special works that have been engaged in already or are ongoing, would be finished, I think by the end of November this year.

Mr. Speaker, there is also institutional strengthening and training. Our strategies are consistent with the National Strategic Plan, which was laid already in this Parliament, that speaks to the question of enhancing Barbados' prosperity and competitiveness. Mr. Speaker, you cannot improve competitiveness through talk from individuals, there has to be a policy framework, and consistent with what we heard in here last week, there has to be a particular strategy. Mr. Speaker, whether or not it is an industrial strategy, a tourism strategy or a manufacturing strategy, there has to be a particular strategy.

Therefore, to the extent that there is reform, and substantial reform as will occur in the industrial sector, then you can afford to make lofty predictions and projections about Barbados' performance because you are not making a projection on the status quo, you are making a projection on the transformation which you intend to make to the particular sector. Mr. Speaker, even though it may be ambitious to talk about \$100 or a \$1 billion in exports over the next seven years, it would be achievable, because there is a transformation of the industrial base. In similar vein, if you speak about the Caves of Barbados and tourism products and you transform the product, then you can afford to have a more ambitious projection in terms of the revenue stream that would flow from the Caves of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, what I am suggesting is that prosperity and competitiveness would therefore have to rest in the bosom of policy, whether it relates to manufacturing, tourism or any other area of the Barbados economy.

Mr. Speaker, let me go on because this is pretty wide-ranging stuff here. The question now is: Having designed this product, and it is a new product, what should we charge? Should our charge reflect the demands that are only local or should the charge reflect the demands that are both foreign and local? Mr. Speaker, to the extent that we are free to charge a price, can we impose a price on locals that would differ from that of the foreign individual? Can you afford to have prices discrimination in terms of your charge? Mr. Speaker, that is important because it is not only about the product that you are restoring or renovating or enhancing. The question is: To what extent could you recover the revenue that you want to recover in order to justify the investment that has been made?

Mr. Speaker, you cannot make a decision to recover such an investment and make the decision only on the basis on whom you feel you are seeking to subsidise that would enter the Caves of Barbados. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I

wish to make the point very clearly that the price you charge would be determined truly by the demand for the product, therefore, to the extent that you could determine who would demand this new product up ahead, you would make a price that people would be willing to pay.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reinforce this point I am about to make, I have made it before in this Parliament. Mr. Speaker, unless you make financial decisions based on financial data, you are going to make the wrong decisions. If you make a decision based on financial data and you charge a price commensurate with the information, and you want others to have access to that product, then you have to come with a separate decision to subsidise or make this product available and accessible to other persons.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, there would be nothing wrong if the Caves of Barbados decide that they want school children to enter the Cave at a particular price and therefore make the product accessible and available to school children. Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of policy I am talking about. Mr. Speaker, you do not first of all include those persons that you wish to make the product available to and charge a price, you charge a price based on the data which you have, and then you make the decision as to who else you want to have access to that price.

Mr. Speaker, while that may appear to be a very simple comment, it informs the future of Barbados. Sir, you first allow the market, based on the information, to determine the price of a product, and then you make the political decision, whether or not you want others to have access to that product, and the political decision would say yes, then Government makes the decision in similar vein to allow others to have access.

Mr. Speaker, it would happen in the housing market and in the land market. It is currently happening in Government's land policy with respect to the Urban Development Commission and charging only \$2.50 and giving a subsidy on top for the landowner. It happens in the area of housing, by the National Housing Corporation. What I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, is that you first make decisions on the basis of information and then you make the political decision as to whom else you wish to have access to this product.

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Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, this product could go beyond Harrison's Cave because there are communities leading to the Caves, which could, therefore, participate. These communities such as Allen View, Welchman Hall,

Bryans Road, Bloomsbury, Chapman Village, Sturges, Lion Castle, that would be able to say that the Cave is a natural phenomenon given to them by the Grace of God but that it has a potential to be used economically. Therefore, there are other benefits beyond the economic benefits that could be derived from the expansion of this Cave, which these communities may consider to be social.

Mr. Speaker, the decision, therefore, to allow other communities around the Caves to become part of the process, is a political and social one that would be made, to incorporate others into this opportunity that would be provided at the Caves of Barbados. Those are the kinds of decisions that we must make.

Mr. Speaker, in short, therefore, I have just talked about the product at the Caves of Barbados, which has to be renovated in light of what we are seeing. The other point I wish to make in this debate, is that the future demand for this product would also reflect the structure of our tourism in the future. Sir, let me explain this in more detail: persons who may visit, at the lower end, may very well have a desire more so to see the Caves of Barbados. It might be so, I am speculating on this, therefore, as our tourism product changes, then the demand for this kind of product might very well change in the foreseeable future.

It is, therefore, very critical for the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport to sustain as much as it can, the cruise ship industry, to be able to sustain the overall potential of this product, to grow into the future. Therefore, it becomes critical that we guard against establishing these kind of products that become part of the tourism mix. We have to understand that the changing character of tourism can, in fact, impact on the potential demand for this product in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, this decision cannot be made in isolation from other things, there must be consistency in policy. Sir, if you were on the other side...

MR. SPEAKER: Are you referring to me?

Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: No, Sir. If you were on the other side, those would be the kind of decisions that you would make in this debate. You would not make flippant comments about whether or not Chinese are going to be ones involved in the construction, you would be concerned about the more important issues relating to the product itself.

Asides.

Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: There are people who tell lies every day. There are people who tell lies for a living.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you referring to any Honourable Members, Sir.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Sir, you have one minute in which to conclude.

Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: There are people who have told lies for their entire lives. I know several of them. I went to school with some, who have told lies for their entire lives, so that is nothing new.

Asides.

Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: Who he? I do not even see him in my vocabulary. I look forward to deal with him in the future, I could tell you that.

MR. SPEAKER: Who are you talking about now, Sir?

Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: Whoever he is. I do not know who 'he' is but I look forward to it. And listen, I would end on this note, I will look forward to him and to the upcoming, whenever it is. I am sorry I was not here last week.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time has expired.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, with the hour being almost 30 minutes past noon, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 1.30 p.m.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

12.25 p.m.

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RESUMPTION

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

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am happy for the privilege to be a part of this

discussion today in relation to the redevelopment of the Harrison's Cave and the environs surrounding the Cave. I am extremely pleased about the implementation of this project and I want at the outset to express sincere appreciation and thanks to all persons, who have been involved in this redevelopment project. Indeed, I want to thank those persons who would have been at the vanguard of working with the development of Harrison's Cave on the whole but, in particular, I want to focus on the Ministries and the agencies involved as well as the residents who will stand to get some benefits. Indeed, we know that over the past 25 years or so, they have been living and having some experiences, which most of the time they consider not to be the best but, at other times, exciting.

I believe that the Honourable Member for St. James South did a comprehensive representation this morning of the redevelopment project. I know that as a result of her interest, care and concern that she has afforded opportunities through her various agencies in that department to have dialogue with residents, to keep me informed of the process and, indeed, to seek suggestions for some of these aspects of what we hear discussed today. Sir, I want to express sincere thanks to her as well for the privilege to be an integral part of the redevelopment package for the Harrison's Cave area.

Mr. Speaker, we consider Harrison's Cave as the eighth wonder of the world but for us in Barbados, it should be the first wonder of the world because it is a real part of the natural development and it has served us well over the past 25 years in respect of being an area of beauty, where not only our locals but visitors from the region and the international world come every time and want to go back to see the stalagmites, the stalactites, the water formation, the fauna and the flora of the area, where the cave is situated. I believe that all of us as Barbadians should see this project as for the public good, not only for the persons of Allan View and the surrounding districts but all of Barbados because it is a large foreign exchange earner and we need to make sure that the environs are enhanced to facilitate more visitors and to involve more Barbadians in the employment sector as well as to provide a measure of appreciation and admiration.

Mr. Speaker, over ten communities are affected by some the zonal restrictions but, as I said before, we understand the reasons why. Therefore, if you would allow me, I would wish to make mention of these community and also highlight the ways in which the various departments of the Ministry of Environment are helping to sensitise residents and property owners as well as to integrate them into the various activities so that at the end of the day there is a buy-in process to this whole exercise. Sir, we are talking about Ashford, Carrington's Village, Vault Road, Allan View, Chapman's Village, Welchman Hall, which

comprises Welchman Hall 1 and 2 and the main road, Broomsbury, Highland, Bryan's Road and Sturges.

Mr. Speaker, some of the challenges that have arose have been ironed out and some are still hanging but I believe that with time and further communication, we would be able to address them in a more systematic and formal manner. Sir, some of the challenges with the zonal restrictions are to do with properties that are in the area where properties have been purchased or leased by Government.

There are some experiences that residents have where they cannot build a new house if they have property but they have the privilege to expand or upgrade the facility in which they live. They can improve and upgrade the current home; they can change wooden houses to wall structures; they can add a toilet or bathroom, as water-borne facilities are included, but there is a specific reason why that should take place as soon as possible. We still have some pit toilets in the area so this whole aspect of the water-borne toilet is very pertinent.

Mr. Speaker, they can put a house on a vacant lot, provided that the spot was occupied before and the residents can continue to be small farmers and keep pigs, chickens and sheep for domestic use. Sir, t a Class I farmer, a small scale farmer, can continue that practice but it is with the necessary monitoring, checks, feedbacks, following the regulations and so on. Sir, a lot of the household expansion has to do with the permission that is granted by the Town & Country Planning Department in order for the upgrade and expansion to take place. Sir, those are some of the challenges.

Mr. Speaker, the other challenge I would want to highlight is the running water connections where some persons have been living there for many years and perhaps because they did not have the wherewithal to have the water connection, it is still a challenge but gradually, with another project that is coming, I hope that this issue would be resolved as a matter that is high on the agenda in that particular project.

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Sequence 16

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Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: There is also the challenge of persons who say they did not receive royalties, because of the shafts that have beeb placed on their properties, but communication with the Ministry indicated that plans are afoot, to ensure those kinds of issues can be controlled.

Mr. Speaker, some of the challenges which have caused serious impact on the cave, the stalactites and stalagmites, are the contaminants in fertilizers, waste water and domestic water which comes from households, business, and fertilisers. That is reason restrictions were put in place, the waste from livestock, the water on the road, and so on. I believe that the strategies of zoning the communities and some other restrictions now in place would help to control or minimise the impact on the cave.

Sir, the Housing Neighbourhood Upgrade Project, sponsored by the IDB, is a method used for some of those households without waterborne toilet or running water, to benefit, while the dwellings would be enhanced. Waterborne toilets would be put in place. Sir, embracing of residents of the area, dialouge, listening to their concerns, directing them towards forms of employment and training, all of these are in that package, the Housing Neighbourhood Upgrade.

Sir, the community enjoyed tremendous benefits over the last fifteen years. I want to commend the Ministry of the Environment, and more particularly, the Management and Staff of the Environmental Special Project Unit, at Sturges. I know that if the Ministry did not embrace the entire project, then the Environmental Special Project Unit could not have implemented what it had in its plans. Sir, I think a lot of it represents the kind of personalities working in that department, reaching out to the people in the environs of the Harrison's Cave, to bring them into the business of being a part of the development of the Cave.

Mr. Speaker, for the last few years, we have experienced "De heart ah Barbados". The parish of St. Thomas is the heart of Barbados, the beauty, the ambience of the entire parish, the relationship and personalities of the people, help to add to the whole exercise.

Sir, the Project Unit has been working with the local population, encouraging people to volunteer. I am sure you would have known of the residents' involvement in various activities, tours, road racing, sale of produce, schooling, community, visits to sites on weekends through the "De heart ah Barbados", the Highland outdoor tours, the ecosystem project at Spring Vale, the Flower Forest and Welchman Hall Gully. Sir, the Jipny Rides and Transport Board buses are also all involved in integrating residents and visitors in that project, giving it life for three or four days in June every year.

Sir, the training of residents is important. It helps them to give a better understanding of the history of the parish and the service they must give. Sir, this is a time when must say, "What I can do for my country, and not necessary, what my country can do for me." It seems to be the other way around. Our foreparents always said, "Let me

do for my country and not sit back and wait for my country to do for me." Mr. Speaker, the whole outlook of the Environmental Special Project Unit, with De Heart ah Barbados Programme, helps us to understand our roles as citizens.

Sir, there is, indeed, a tremendous amount of sponsorship. We heard the Unity Group, mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. James South, the Youth with a Future Camp, held every year in the parish for the people of St. Thomas, more particularly the children, who live around the areas of the Harrison's Cave, and that is held at Holy Innocents School. The use of the Project house facilities for various activities, weddings and social functions. The Youth Path Group, comprising young people from the parish of St. Thomas and their involvement in national heritage and tourism projects. Last year they were given an extension of funding by UNESCO, to continue to pursue their goals. Sir, they are doing well, helping to promote Barbados internationally.

Mr. Speaker, the mural on the school wall is another thing, that speaks to deep involvement and sensitisation of Harrison's Cave. It was done by a resident of Allen View, a young artist, who continues to do exceptionally good work. Sir, if you would allow me to mention the name of the late Lester Vaughn, when I see the painting, where his profile is enshrined on the walls of the Holy Innocents School, for me, that is a wonderful aspect of our history that we can continue to harness, as a result of the work of the Project Unit, as well as the Environmental Club at Holy Innocents School.

Sir, the young children are engaged in a hydroponics project with lettuce. That too helps them, and they have now established the Environmental Club. Mr. Speaker, all of this came out of the Harrison's Cave experience and the sensitisation of residents.

Sir, indeed, those young children used large metal cans, known to us as garbage cans, and rather than placing a regular can on the street, at the school or any business place, they were hand painted, using pictorial representations of the foliage of Barbados. I thought that was an excellent project that should continue to if sensitisation is to take place.

Sir, already, there are some aspects of improvement in the village, but, indeed, this redevelopment project will say more, and the residents, road users and visitors would be more relaxed. Sir, a new pipe main has been installed, with road repairs, and the constructions of sidewalks in the village of Allen View. The surrounding communities have also been improved, as a result of this Government's interest in ensuring that Barbados is one country. There is a rural Barbados and an urban Barbados, but at the end of the

day, all the taxpayers are receiving the benefits of this Government's plans and programmes.

Sir, at this time, I would like to request compensation for residents in a timely manner. As I said, many of them are poor people. They rely on the available funding to raise and educate their families. Sir, to keep their funds outstanding for 15, 20 or 25 years, is really a tremendous burden.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the present project involved the acquisition of more properties. I also know that there has been dialogue, not only with the residents, but with their legal representatives. I believe we should be able to put a system in place, to compensate them, on a timely manner, rather than the long wait which has been the case with many other projects on the island.

Sir, I would like to suggest at this time, that the Cave should be open to the public at night as well. There has been a trial run, and I understand that the response was, perhaps, not as good, but I believe that if you are talking about residents of Barbados, people in the community who want to attend, few of them would want to miss their employment to visit the Cave. Sir, for some, weekends are difficult, but they are others who have a little extra time at night, or they have friends who are visiting the island, and would like to take them on a tour, but because the Cave is usually closed at night, it is a little difficult for them to do so. I believe the exploration, after the redevelopment package phase comes to a halt, could be introduced in a phased manner as well, for us to see the entertainment that will take place there, as well as tour the facility.

Sir, the fact that the project entails a large scope of works, I want to commend, again, the Ministry and the Government, for the highway improvement. Sir, anyone who walks from Harrison's Cave to Welchman Hall, where the gas station was located, knows that there is no sidewalk on the left, on the way to town. There has been a little improvement on the right-hand side, opposite Bryan's Road

13.50 p.m.

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House 137, Sequence 18, 1.50 p.m.

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: I believe the sidewalks that would be included are very important because we have some motorists who are very uncaring. The way they drive on our highways, Mr. Speaker, leaves a lot to be desired. I wonder if they at some time have to walk as well. We have little children whose parents are not as fortunate as others,

who still have to walk to school, to church and to the supermarket. Therefore, the sidewalks that will be included in this road improvement are welcomed.

I too want to support that nature trail. We need to do more walking around in our villages, communities and gullies. As a young child, I explored every gully in the parish to the east of where we lived. This is going through the back of the Flower Forest, through Barrow Gully, the Irish Town and into Spring Vale.

Sir, our young people do not get this opportunity for various reasons and it is not that they do not want to go. Our parents sent us there to do chores but our children no longer have to do chores in the gullies or in the lands surrounding the villages. I believe there must be well-coordinated activities for our children to get the chance to see the various natural life in our gullies.

As a result of that, as I said before, I want to support the nature trail. It would help us to better understand the plants that are indigenous to various communities. It would help us to be able to identify them and, of course, the natural beauty, the ambience of the place, the monkeys and the birds, the humming bird, the sparrow, yellow breast and others birds are all in the gullies, but we do not have the access because of the various dangers of what might take place, if our children go there unsupervised.

The recreation area that will accommodate 150 persons is also necessary. Since the Harrison's Cave is now facilitating approximately 200 000 visitors per year, we cannot afford to have a small reception area and people are squeezing through the door and windows, therefore, I support that, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the new visiting centre, I am happy to know that the Ministry has sought to include a disability friendly environment. It is important that our disabled people are not shut away and they have the access that any other persons have, because they too have an appreciation for beauty, life and opportunity. I am happy to know that the disability friendly environment is being made available there.

There will be a bar and restaurant to house 150 persons, with accommodation for private functions. A lot of people would like to go on the Cliff to have their weddings, anniversary ceremonies and so on. I believe that is another way of raising funds towards the Caves of Barbados, Ltd.

There will be a grand exhibition space, with the amphitheatre, where the performances I spoke about, if the place is open at night as well, can take place. There will be new trams that would help to facilitate safe passage in and out of the Cave. The infrastructure in this particular

exercise is designed to mitigate floods and earthquakes. This is very important and it means that disaster preparedness was at the forefront of the planners to ensure that all the heavy rains we are getting would not impact in a serious way, on whatever is happening at that approximately \$51 million project.

Mr. Speaker, I too, am extremely pleased about the idea of employment opportunities for persons living in the surrounding communities. Many of them are asking for kiosks right now through the Project OASIS. Unfortunately, they do not have the access to the land but as long as they could bring some form of information indicating that permission has been granted, they would get help. We do not want people to go willy-nilly and put down kiosks.

I believe that this coordinated effort by the Ministry of the Environment and the Caves of Barbados, Ltd. would help to promote an approach of order in that village, when those people go there.

Therefore, this is a good way to reduce the unemployment in the villages, as well as to promote the entrepreneurial spirit that a lot of our young Barbadians want to pursue. Many of them do not want to work for anybody, especially those boys and girls on the block. They tell you upfront that they want to be able to work for themselves. They have skills in basketry, they have a good way of selling items, and they are good at making cakes and pastries. I believe this is a great opportunity for those individuals in the villages to be able to gain employment to help to feed and support their families.

As I said, Project OASIS has already started a project in Allen View, and I am happy that those young men have called to express their gratitude. This is what I call a caring Government. This is what I call planning for the future and ensuring that Barbadians get a piece of the cake.

Another aspect of my concern, beyond the quick compensation is to do with the illegal dumping that was mentioned by two Honourable Members who spoke before me. I will not hesitate to say openly, Mr. Speaker, that too many of our people have received the highest level of education, but they have been at the lowest level when it comes to treating others like human beings and to conforming with rules and regulations. Sir, too many people are travelling in their vehicles and disposing of their waste on our streets, in our gullies and elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, take something as simple as the pavilion at Bridgfield. If two or three cans are put out in the morning, by the evening, the cans are filled with garbage from somewhere else. There is no house near there, so you would understand of what I speak.

Mr. Speaker, I have grown tired, but I will not give up, with the state of the situation in the Jack-in-the-box Gully. Our gullies have much economic potential, and potential for helping to generate employment and, of course, our gullies are extremely useful for the running of our water to the various aquifers and so on.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James South spoke of a lot of commercial waste but I want to speak about some private citizens, when they have reached a certain level, they buy a new car and they discard of the old car by throwing it in the Jack-in-the-box gully or some other gully, when the oil and petrol are still in the body.

There is a facility for bulky waste at Bagatelle, and we must conform to the rules and regulations of the country. When we go to Canada, the United States of America, Mexico or wherever, we adhere to the rules for garbage disposal and we must do the same in this country, whether it is bulky waste or regular household waste.

I am sad to say, Mr. Speaker, that the Parish of St. Thomas, to my mind, has become the biggest dumping ground in Barbados. Therefore, I do not want to talk about Vacluse because that is another story but the Ministry of Health has been working closely with us, through the Sanitation Service Authority to help to minimise the problem.

Sir, there is hazardous materials in the gullies, Jack-in-the-Box, Bloomsbury and Sturges. Mr. Speaker, this is tangential, if you would allow me...Yesterday evening we went to St. George and saw the gully that was burning. We went to the school first and the odour almost killed us, and we were only there for a half an hour to forty-five minutes. Sir, children and residents live in that area.

Again, this is a result of persons who care only about themselves and their own private domains but they do not care about other people's health or their well-being. It is so wrong and I am hurt at the way the parish is being treated, as a result of the illegal dumping, by people whom I expect to know better.

Therefore, I encourage the people of St. Thomas and the people of Barbados to get up and stand up for what is right. They should come together and mobilise in community groups, and make agreements to look out and write down truck numbers, car numbers or tractor numbers, whatever the form of transportation that is bringing the bulky waste to dispose of in our gullies, Sir, which is hazardous to all of us and it will impact on our health, if not now, sometime later, or generations to come.

When we poison a well with hazardous waste as a result of our illegal disposal, it will impact on the lives of many others who are innocent in this respect. Therefore, I

call for more policing of these areas, not by the police themselves, but by the residents who live in these communities and know the perpetrators. They know the culprits, so they should write down the numbers, the time and date, and make sure there is a proper followup in this respect. Therefore, with respect to our water, gully systems, animals and humans, it must be stopped and the only persons who could change that around are the adults, and the other residents who get involved.

Our children receive the necessary guidance and sensitisation at school, church and community clubs but enough is not being done by the adults. I called them big 'hard back' adults, whom we expect to know better.

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Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I support the call for vigilance among persons in the communities and the policing that should take place to eliminate this scourge. I believe that more environmental education programmes must take place. In the same way that the Holy Innocents Primary School has got the Environmental Awareness Club, more schools need to do it, more churches and more community groups need to get on board and help to promote the practice of good environment and good skills that would help to eliminate such bad practices.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this expenditure is necessary since all Barbadians and indeed all visitors who would come to get a view of our magnificent Harrison's Cave would benefit as a result. I am happy for this substantial project which would help to change the landscape of the communities in and around Allen View and Harrison's Cave. I know that the visitors would be happy, but the residents are happier because their environments have been enhanced.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two minutes to conclude.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: I want to thank all of the residents of Allen View, Sturges, Bloomsbury, Welchman Hall, Ashford, Carrington's Village and Chapman Village for their support over the years, but more particularly the residents of Allen View who would be the ones whose lives would be heavily impacted upon especially now that the redevelopment is taking place because there would be some challenges, some marl, some trenches and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that sometimes we have to experience some negatives in order to get the benefits of the good that would come in the future. Mr. Speaker, I know that there would be some inconveniences that must be tackled and must be handled well, with the dialogue and

so that should take place and that has been taking place over the years.

Sir, I believe that at the end of it all, the redevelopment project at Harrison's Cave will redound to the benefit of every Barbadian in some way, whether it be in an economic fashion, in an enhancement fashion because of the upgrade of the streets or whatever, or in the ambience of that entire area.

Mr. Speaker, we the people of St. Thomas are extremely pleased with this project and look forward to its completion so that we could continue to take advantage of whatever is being offered.

I wish to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue from where the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has finished.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say from the outset that there is no doubt that this project has potential, but that we have to be very careful that we do not interfere with the environment as we seek to enlarge the economic value of this product.

Sir, I also want to say from the outset that this debate sounds very familiar. Sir, if you check a lot of the things that were said here today, you would see that somebody was reading the Hansard of this Parliament since 1994. As you are aware, Sir, this debate, what was said, and that is the positive, is recorded in Hansard. The expansion of the Cave and not allowing people to go to the mouth of the Cave to be dropped off or whatever you want to say were all discussed in this Parliament already. Sir, it was also discussed that the people of St. Thomas should have a right to earn a living from the Cave. It was also discussed that Harrison's Cave should not have been seen as that area down the hill, but as that area as you come from the post office and traverse to get to the particular cave. Mr. Speaker, the Opposition cannot be unhappy that the Government of Barbados has now accepted, after many years, the suggestion from the Opposition that Harrison's Cave is too important for it to be seen as that small area down the hill, but should be seen as that area as far up as on top of the hill.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are some Honourable Members who would pretend that they are hearing this for the first time, that is why I am happy that they got something called Hansard to report what occurred previously. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this has value. Sir, one of the first things I would like to know is: If you have a project that is going to cost \$51 million and you have produced finance to the tune of \$33 or \$34 million, where are we going to get the additional financing to

complete this project? Sir, you cannot tell me that you are carrying out \$51 million in capital expenditure, that you have available to you about \$34 million and you are about \$17 million short, yet you come to this Parliament and would not tell me how you are going to finance the additional \$17 million.

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. There is no intention to withhold the information from the House. If the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would direct his attention to the Order Paper, he would see that it deals with the loan for \$33 million, that is why I dealt with the loan and what the loan was intended to do. Other elements of the project, like the trams and so on, are Government financed, which I spoke to earlier. Sir, the Order Paper deals with the loan, therefore there was no intention to conceal any information but to structure the debate around the item on the Order Paper as the Rules of the House require.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the project would cost \$51 million, and we have a Resolution on the Order Paper which calls for \$33 million, therefore, in order for us to have any serious discussion, we would have to know how the shortfall would be financed.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious debate. Sir, in light of everything that was said previously, and when we consider that nearly every Government project now have overruns, we would also like to know if there are any possible overruns on this particular project considering the trend.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South has a lot to say even though he has not spoken in this debate. You cannot hear asides, Sir, but I can. Sir, I am told that Harrison's Cave is one of the six most important tourist attractions in the world. Sir, in an answer to the question from this side, I was told in this Parliament today - I do not want to mislead the House, I want to be correct in my figures - that Harrison's Cave was only able to attract 10 750 persons for the Cricket World Cup. Sir, if I am wrong, I would like somebody from the other side to correct me on this particular matter. Sir, I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South would not be happy to hear that statistic because if there was one location outside of Kensington Oval that one would have expected to see a figure much larger than this, it would have been at Harrison's Cave.

You could talk all you like Mr. Speaker, about the success - when I say Mr. Speaker, this is indirect because I have to speak through you, as you know the Rules of the House - but if there is one location that one would have seen better figures, it would have been Harrison's Cave. Sir, if we have to judge the success of the Cricket World Cup based on Harrison's Cave, you can use this statistic

and come to your own conclusion about Cricket World Cup.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am only dealing with this statistic, I did not interfere with the Honourable Member. Sir, by that aside, he reminded me that there was a note on my pad and I had to deal with that particular note, Sir.

House 137 Sequence 19

2.10 p.m.

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Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is seeking to mislead this Honourable House, if he is seeking to suggest that this was a small number. The Cave was opened for a month, excluding weekends. It, therefore, received close to 400 visitors per day, with an average revenue of \$100 per visitor. This is not an insubstantial figure and I think that is an excellent performance for a period of less than 25 operational days.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I can see that the Honourable Member for St. James South is in a very happy mood today and therefore wants to answer a number of question, and I am very joyful with her.

Mr. Speaker, another fundamental point with which I would like the Honourable Member to deal, is that we are being told that Harrison's Cave would now be used and leased out to accommodate functions. Sir, because of environmental reasons, the people on top of the hill cannot carry out certain functions, yet we are being told that the Caves would be catering to weddings and a number of other social functions. Sir, we would know that for environmental reasons, we would tend not to have people remaining on these properties for long periods because of the negative impact it would have on these properties, for example, people would be constantly using bathrooms, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if we are to agree with anything in this debate, that aspect of entertainment would have to be excluded. Sir, for environmental reasons, Harrison's Cave cannot be used for catering, weddings and other social functions because if that happens, we would have very serious environmental problems. Therefore, I want the Minister, who is not only the Minister of Energy, but it also Minister of the Environment, to rethink this particular point because it would create serious environmental problems for Harrison's Cave. Sir, furthermore, everybody knows where the water flowing

from the Cave ends up. Therefore, it would not only be a problem for St. Thomas but would also be one for the west coast.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I did not suggest that aspect of Harrison's Cave in the first mouthing and therefore, I cannot accept that. As I said, all the sensible suggestions made by me were accepted by this Government but this one that Government is making, I will not accept. I did not give this one to this Government, so they must not claim that it was given to them by me.

Mr. Speaker, this Harrisons Cave issue was not only dealt with in this House, it was dealt with on the political platforms in the By-election of 2001. Sir, at that time, we told the residents of St. Thomas that it was unfair for people...

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I want you to know that we spoke to the people in Welchman Hall and I told the people that it was unfair for the Government to carry out their business and then seek to stop them from accessing economic gains that they would have created, by having the Cave next to them.

Sir, I am glad that the Government has reversed its decision because the Honourable Member for St. Thomas is aware that there were some dictates, telling the residents in those areas... Sir, I think the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would agree with me, that we had to fight but he is so gracious that he would not want to accept...

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, you know you cannot say that.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Pardon me, Sir?

MR. SPEAKER: I am just suggesting that you should refer to him as the Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I did not? Sir, if I did not, that is surely by accident. You know my manners would not allow me to slip and if I slipped, then I apologise to this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, we fought to ensure that the people of St. Thomas were not removed from the area around the Cave. We argued that instead of removing these people, even if it meant that we should put a sewerage plant there, then Government should do so.

Sir, at that time, I did not hear anything on that but I still believe now that the West Coast Sewerage Plant is being built and since we are now speaking about that area,

that it would make environment sense to hook St. Thomas up to the West Coast Sewerage Project system. St. Thomas is uphill, while the West Coast Sewerage System would be downhill. Sir, as I argued, since 2001, I honestly believe that the people of St. Thomas should continue to have the benefits of this success because these people were there before the Cave was discovered.

Sir, furthermore, when one considers the fact that there are now foreigners working in that area, the next thing would happen, would be that they would want to live up there and the people of St. Thomas, who have the right to be living there, would not get those rights. Therefore, I need to protect the interest of the people of St. Thomas, whom we have fought for, since 2001.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt this debate has some economic value to it but we have to ensure that the people of St. Thomas would gain from this economic value. Sir, far too often we have seen cases where people come to Barbados and get privileges that Barbadians cannot have. Sir, all I am saying is that we have to ensure that we protect the interest of those persons living in that parish. Sir, this is what this debate should be about and will be about.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am happy to see the expansion of areas around the Caves. I honestly believe that even the areas around the Post Office should be involved in this particular expansion. Sir, I know the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown has a good memory and would remember the debate on this particular issue, which is that Harrison's Cave is too important to be looked at as just the area down the hill. Sir, too often in Barbados we tend to limit the development of this country, by narrowing in to a small area, without realising that we could expand the area and make it bigger by providing other facilities and amenities.

Mr. Speaker, I had this very argument in relation to the Port St. Charles debate. It is the same argument I had in relation to the Airport Expansion Project. Sir, I believe that places such as these that can stand alone, are too important not to add other amenities. Sir, I believe when we have something important, that we should use it to get the full potential out of it.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am saying that those areas, such as the Holy Innocents Church, Welchman Hall Gully and the Post Office, could all be used, so that when people come into Welchman Hall, instead of using the normal transport in order to get to the Cave, by putting attractions along those areas, people could walk through these attractions and eventually end up at the Cave.

Mr. Speaker, we have to utilise what we have but people believe when we bring tourists, from all over the world, that we have to pamper to them when, in their own

countries, these people are prepared to walk miles to get to where they are going. Sir, development in Barbados cannot be limited to a small area, development must be utilised and maximised to its fullest.

Sir, I am saying that they have only started on what we have suggested that there is more potential in this area. All of those business people to the north of the Welchman Hall Gully, if this project is developed properly, they too could gain from Harrison's Cave. We now have to draw the line; the Harrison's Cave cannot be seen only as that location as is described on the map of Barbados, we have to redraw that map and expand the Harrison's Cave location.

Mr. Speaker, this can be found in Hansard, I have already said this and I am only repeating it now. Sir, there is no doubt when it comes to eco-tourism, the parish that has that potential is St. Thomas. That is why I cannot understand why we are talking so much about tourism and cannot acknowledge that there is great potential in St. Thomas, as it relates to heritage and eco-tourism. I cannot understand why we would not exploit it. If I were to say this anywhere else, the one thing I would have to say is that we have not touched the heart of tourism in St. Thomas as yet, and that the potential is there but that we have to utilise that potential, to maximise the gains of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we brag about being a tourism country, yet we do not understand and appreciate what we have in this country Barbados.

2.40 p.m.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the only part outside of Harrison's Cave that has this type of potential is that female part. I do not have to tell you which female part because there is only one female part in this country. Sir, this is why we have to develop these areas and empower the people around these areas.

Mr. Speaker, it is okay to say in this House that these things must be for the people of St. Thomas. We should have said that the people of St. Thomas would get first call. If we do not say that and they cannot provide, then there is capacity that would not be utilised and because of statements made in this House, we would not be able to fully utilise the benefits of that particular area. Sir, I am calling for the rights of those people in that area to be acknowledged but the project must be seen much larger. We recognise that instead of calling for the people in St. Thomas to have all rights in this particular area that we should be calling on the people of Barbados to provide the local services and goods to ensure that we have a proper package to sell to tourists.

Mr. Speaker, there are too many people in Barbados who are making local produce and cannot find places to sell them. I am saying that one of the best places to develop local manufacturing and other things like this would be in that particular area. This is why we cannot limit it to the entrance of the Cave as we know it on the top of the hill now, the road leading into the Cave, but we must go down to the post office and develop a market that could be operated on a yearly basis. There are many people living in St. Thomas who make hats, jewelry and things like that from local stuff. Sir, the potters from St. Andrew, St. Joseph and all those areas should be allowed to come and market their goods in this particular area considering it is regarded at the No. 1 tourist attraction in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about getting \$1 billion from manufacturing, then creative ideas like this must be accepted. We have to recognise that we have to provide the marketplace for our manufacturers and if it means that we have to go to all the tourist attractions and find a piece of land to develop these markets, then we have to do it. Sir, we have to be serious about what we are doing in Barbados and understand that it is not by narrowing down a project to a particular area but we need the capacity to understand that area and to bring in more people to make it more attractive.

Mr. Speaker, today we cannot be discussing Harrison's Cave, we have to be discussing that economic project in St. Thomas that would not only be people going to see the Cave but people coming to Barbados to be part of our manufacturing spirit and also having an opportunity to see the Cave. Sir, we in Barbados have opportunities but we need to appreciate what we have and know what we have to do to ensure that we allow those persons in Barbados, who have creativity to have an opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I honestly believe that it is the right of the Government to provide a space for somebody, who has a talent and open that space to that person. There are too many people in Barbados, who are very creative but they do not have anywhere to market their goods. I am saying that the Government of Barbados is obligated to find that space for those persons, that this is the right beginning and that we should not limit it to that area just on top of the hill, what we now call the entrance to Harrison's Cave but that we should go down to the post office and use that stretch up to the Cave to open up a whole market for people who can make hats, use cane lily, use ceramics, and all those other things because it cannot be about the Cave, it has to be everything around the Cave.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados must get a piece of the cake. Sir, if we do not do this, we will find all sorts of goods coming into Barbados and people who work on the Cave and who know people who can manufacturer goods, would be able to get the goods inside Barbados and people who are living here, who have creativity would not

get an opportunity. This is what I call enlightening Government and, Sir, we need an enlightened Government to empower our people. This is why I was quick to ensure that when this Parliament was encouraged to put a tourist attraction within a tourist attraction, I said no. I said that the tourist attraction must be somewhere else because what I see as a tourist attraction now is not only the attraction but what can go around the attraction to make it more attractive.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of opportunities in Barbados but we are wasting them. If this Government wants to continue to waste time, I am asking them to step aside and allow creativity to step in for these things to happen. Sir, at the end of the day, when we are finished borrowing this money, we must be able to empower people to get the foreign exchange to repay the loan. We do not repay loans in Barbadians dollars, we repay loans in foreign exchange.

Sir, I am speaking about foreign loans and in order to do that, we are going to borrow or work for what we want. This is an opportunity for us to earn some good hard foreign exchange but people believe that you could only earn foreign exchange by the money you pay as entrance fees to go into the Cave. Sir, I say no, that is pittance, that there is far more money that could be earned if we ensure that we understand what this project is about and put the necessary infrastructure in place to maximise the return. Sir, it is not the Cave, it is what could happen around the Cave that should be important and would be important.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said that the boys on 'the block' do not want to work for anybody. Sir, they are very creative people but they want to have an opportunity and do not want to just make goods and then somebody tell them to put them in their stores. They want to be able to make the goods and to market the good themselves and they must have an opportunity to do that. This is why you see some bright, creative young men, who would make some nice leather shoes but these people want somewhere of importance to market the goods. I am saying that if you already have that, it is only location that now matters.

If we are rethinking and the Government has accepted that it cannot be just Harrison's Cave and has gone the first stage in implementing part of what I have said, I want them not to piecemeal what I am saying and I want the whole hog. Sir, I want the whole thing implemented because I do not accept that when I give a total idea that people take a piece here and a piece there. I do not believe in a piecemeal approach, I believe in a holistic approach because I am making the point in the interest of the country and it should be accepted and implemented in the fullest, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that this is only one of the locations in Barbados that could be used for this type of project. I know that we have some young men and women in the Ministry and that they understand what has to be done. I only hope that the politicians would not block their way and that they would allow them to implement these projects. Sir, I know they have a holistic approach but some politicians believe they must do it in a piecemeal approach because as, one would say, this project is only for the people of St. Thomas, which tells me from the beginning that you are limiting this project. Sir, this project is so big, that if it is implemented the right way, the people of St. Thomas alone would not be able to supply the goods needed for a project like this but we would have to call on the whole of Barbados and after that is satisfied, we could then look to the Chinese.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that when we employ Barbadians that we retain the majority of what we have within but when we go outside of Barbados and employ people, who do not belong to Barbados, we are looking to borrow and re-export foreign exchange at the same time. I am saying that cost overrun, using local labour does not impact on the economy as when you have a cost overrun using foreign labour. I am saying that we pay local labour in Bajan dollars but when you are paying foreign labour and that money has to go out, that there is a foreign exchange cost to it.

H137/14:30

Sequence 21

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, too many people, for selfish gains, look after the interest of themselves and not the country Barbados. I am saying that politicians must understand that at the end of their tenure, other people have to pick up the mantle and run with it, and that there is a cost to this country. We do not make foreign exchange. We have to earn foreign exchange. If we borrow foreign exchange, it has to be repaid, so, the emphasis has to be on retaining as much foreign exchange in this country, as possible. This project gives us a good opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, do not let us, today narrow this debate on a piecemeal basis, but let us be wide and holistic, while acknowledging what we are dealing with.

Sir, there is a foreign exchange cost, and we need to ensure that the foreign exchange is maximised to enable us to repay this loan, and to find foreign exchange to help service the debts of this country.

I thank you very much.

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

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, let us bring the debate back to a proper and sensible leaning.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is giving the impression that you sat in your Chair and did not allow us to operate in a proper and sensible way. I think this is a very serious reflection on you. I would not allow anybody in this House to do that to you, Sir.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, let me begin, first, by offering congratulations to the Minister and the Ministry of the Environment, and all those who have been involved with the redevelopment of the Cave and all of the installations in that area.

Sir, this particular project, even though based in the Ministry of the Environment, and even though particularly relevant as an environmental project, it is as much a tourism project, as it is an environmental project. Therefore, this particular project is symbolic, in terms of both our tourism and environmental and structures. Sir, it is practical. Therefore, the ecological and environmental integration that is attached to initiatives like this, is clearly demonstrative again of the leanings of this Government and this administration. Sir, the ecological and environmental integrity, that is being preserved in that particular way, is symbolic of everything else we are doing, and really does attach itself to how we in this administration see the development of these areas.

Mr. Speaker, the \$51 million spent, in my opinion,

money well-invested for the future economic earning potential of this investment and investments like this. The economic earning potential of this particular project is immense. Therefore, I begin by commending it to this Honourable House and to all the people of Barbados.

Sir, the objectives, as laid out for this project, are clear. To have an economical and environmentally sustainable basis for the operation of Harrison's Cave.

Secondly, to improve both the financial viability and the environmental sustainability for the use of the cave. I cannot imagine any other project for that area that can be more meaningful to that particular community, and by extension to this country, than this particular project that is being broker in that area, at this time.

Sir, it also has a number of fundamental ideals, which we have been pushing and creating structures to deal with. The reality of the community development, the community coming together in this area, as part and parcel

of this project, is also paramount to its success. If for no other reason today, the thought of spending this money, tourism aside, the knitting of the community for the development of this project is paramount, integral and important for the development of this country.

Sir, clearly, this project fits in and among the suite of infrastructural improvements that are also coming to Barbados, and are as important to economic development through tourism and community development, as any of the projects we are doing. I would suspect that if you refurbish your Port, revamp and rebuild your airport and Harrison's Cave, there are entities and installations that are as important to locals as there are to tourists. Particularly so, in the tourist sphere, I believe that this has a number of important dimensions.

Sir, first of all, this particular project is rife with commercial relevance. The opportunities for the people of Barbados, particularly people whom some seem to think are isolated from projects like this. The development of small businesses, vending in the area, and the expectations from community development, but particularly in the commercial sphere, are important.

Sir, as I said, the community development in this area is important, but also the structural integration of our environmental assets, because of the four important environmental assets that we have in this area. We have not only brought them together in a more structured way, but Government, for the first time, is focusing on bringing them together through this project.

Mr. Speaker, another important point, is clearly the structured integration of our environmental assets and your number one economic earning sector, which is tourism. Sir, for along time we have had projects, believing that people would just come and visit, but this project is smack within the domain of bringing together our environmental assets, while combining them with the development of our tourism industry.

In addition, the infrastructural development from this, points again to the entire infrastructural improvement of our country, road repair, the concept of the traffic signage, and the improvement of signage in the area speak to this project, not only for tours to the Cave or as a tourism project, but help to improve the infrastructural nature of that particular area of Barbados. Sir, the other issue is, how we have redeveloped the Cave, respecting and conforming with the building code.

In addition, the Cave, its heritage and cultural value are important. We have a lot of heritage assets in Barbados, but we are not doing enough to preserve and market. Therefore, this project speaks to that heritage and cultural

values that need to be squarely placed on the front burner in Barbados, as we become a developed nation.

Sir, the concept of local and visitor interaction : For a long time we have been saying that we should not promote tourism in Barbados, only for visitors. If the product is not sound, patronised, accepted and endorsed by our locals, it really means that we do not have a product to offer to our visitors. Therefore, this is one area that allows that interaction.

Sir, educational potential exists for a revamped and renewed Harrison's Cave. Clearly, there is a lot of scientific potential, in terms of research, that can be done relative to this cave, creating the environmental and structural soundness of the cave, for preservation, as well.

Mr. Speaker, when the Minister began her speech, she spoke of the number of visitors that toured the cave. I believe that she spoke gave a figure of 190 000 persons, that would have tour in the first year, even though the projections at the time were not that high. There are now above 200 000 visitors that tour the cave yearly. Clearly, the way our tourism industry has been advancing and developing, ten years ago we had an average of approximately 450 000 visitors in Barbados, now we have an average of 550 000 visitors a year.

14.40 p.m.

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House 137, Sequence 23, 2.40 p.m.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: This means that in the last decade, our tourism numbers have increased under this administration, by 100 000 on average a year. Therefore, you would imagine how much all of the installations, which cater to tourists need to be upgraded. Sir, over the years we spent a lot of money in the accommodation sector. Clearly, our attractions and amenities are important to the future development of our tourism industry.

Sir, Harrison's Cave is more than that. Harrison's Cave is fundamentally important to our positioning and our marketing as a mature destination. Therefore, a Harrison's Cave that allows Barbados to be branded as one of the few destinations in the region that has an attraction of this sort, raises our equity in the international marketplace, about how we could promote Barbados.

Sir, Harrison's Cave is as important to the branding and marketing of Barbados and for the future marketing potential of Barbados, as any installation. As a matter of fact, Harrison's Cave may be the one attraction that sets us

apart and distinguishes us in our positioning among all the other attractions in the region. Therefore, it is important from that aspect.

Sir, the input cost structures in our tourism industry have risen immensely in the last decade. The way to counter issues of high input cost have to be the production of quality goods and services, and being able to position and brand yourself, so that you set yourself apart.

The issue therefore is that this particular attraction, in association with a brand of quality, sets it apart from the rest of the region and allows us to be able to market Barbados even more effectively than we have been doing in the past. It also allows us to deal with some of these input cost structures that we have been dealing with for so long.

Sir, the other thing is that this particular project is in concert with our national development profile and how we see Barbados. As I said, with the high cost structures that we have, unless our tourism industry develops in concert with our national development profile, it makes no sense comparing Barbados to St. Lucia or Grenada and all the false comparisons that I hear about because Barbados' social and economic development has gone far ahead of these other places.

Therefore, what is important is that our tourism profile mirrors our national development profile. In that regard, Sir, the profile of visitors to Barbados has been changing. The visitors that are coming to Barbados, and this is scientifically assessed, are more mature. They are less into some of the active things that go on in some of the other northern destinations. We have a more complete mix of people coming from both sides of the Atlantic. Therefore, the more upscale, more educated, older client is likely to be attracted to something of this nature.

Sir, we heard all that has been said about tourism development. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy would like people to believe that he is a tourism guru. The Honourable gentleman does not have a clue about proper tourism development and its structures.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, you cannot say that.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: He has few clues then, Sir. He has a number of clues that are disparate and are few and far between.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have to withdraw that, please.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: I accept that he does have a clue.

Sir, he has long talked about the issue of community tourism, and I must give him credit. He has been a proponent of community tourism for a long time. Clearly, this project fits within that domain very squarely. The issue of inland tourism development, which is ideal for us, I believe that most Barbadians are beginning to believe that once the beach and everything else on the beach...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that I have claimed to be a tourism guru.

The public of Barbados knows I have never claimed that, Sir, and the Honourable Member has claimed it and the public now has him to judge on those matters as it relates to World Cup cricket.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, that is no point of order, please.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, Inland tourism development has been the ideal for a long time. Many Barbadians, for a long time, have been saying that inland tourism is where it is at, Sir, let me be specific.

Most people who come to a small tropical island are not looking to go inland. They are looking for the beach and the amenities around the beach, the sun, sea and surf. Sir, if we are to continue to diversify our tourism product, clearly we have to move inland, and what we have struggled for in a small jurisdiction, is the perfect way to advance such, within our own island.

Sir, with this particular project, if you are going to go inland, you must have the amenities, services and attraction that suit the development of inland tourism, natural and manmade, such as golf courses and spas. Therefore, this particular project now fits that ideal, because it makes no sense just talking about inland tourism, unless you have the structures that support the development of inland tourism, so I commend this particular project to all of Barbados.

The Ministry of Tourism has been working with the Ministry of Environment on the "De Heart ah Barbados" Project. This is a project that allows in that area, at a certain time of the year, the development of tourism, in concert with the environmental progress and advancement that we are making. Sir, it allows for the concept of a bed and breakfast service emerging. It allows for commerce to emerge. It allows tourists and the community to get together.

Sir, as I said, the one true thing that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said in recent time, is the whole concept of the community tourism development. I give him

that, and he must have heard it somewhere because he never had an original thought.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, may I remind you of the rule of imputing, please. You have to withdraw that please, and let us move on.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that the Honourable Member has not repeated many things I have said in this House. It is known in the public of Barbados that he is my photocopy.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, I accept that, then.

Sir, I will move on.

The issue of community tourism, I do say that this meets that ideal, but the one important thing is that if we are going to move inland, clearly, we must have products and services that advance the concept of moving inland, and this is one.

Sir, some people had the opportunity to talk about the four Cs that are important to Barbados' and the Government's commercial development. I offer them four Cs that surround this particular project, which move it ahead, and place it squarely at the forefront of how we develop Barbados.

1. The first C is that this particular project focuses on the Consumer. We have brought a project to both the local and the visitor that clearly is in concert with their development.
2. The next C is Cost. The costs of this particular project are in line with what we projecting, and what we are actually going to get out of this project, are in line with those costs.
3. Sir, the other C is Communication. We have communicated this to the public in a very sensible way, and it is a project that we could take overseas to raise our tourism equity.
4. The other C is Convenience. Sir, we have created a project that is very convenient for all of our visitors and locals.

House 137, sequence 23, 14:50:14

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, those are four Cs that speak to the development of Barbados and to all of the

ideals that are the hallmark and trademark of the Owen Arthur administration.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the matter before us concerning the guarantee for the Caves of Barbados Limited. Sir, like the Honourable Members on this side, I want the very best for what I think has become Barbados' premier attraction for our visitors and locals alike. However, at the same time, I think it is appropriate that we ask a few questions.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has suggested that he gathered from the contributions on this side that we did not have any difficulty with the \$51 million being spent on the Cave. I am not sure that comment was expressly stated on this side, in fact, I am satisfied that it was not said by any Honourable Member on this side.

Mr. Speaker, we know that words sometimes come back to haunt us, but I do not mind, it could go into the Hansard forever and ever. Mr. Speaker, I would say on behalf of the people of St. Michael South Central that I think that figure sounds a little high. Sir, I am going to question whether or not \$51 million in that attraction is indeed money well-spent in terms of the quantity. It has been seeing visitors since 1981, there would be wear and tear, and naturally we would have to invest, they would have to do the necessary repair work, but the question I would ask is: Is that really an appropriate sum of money to spend on one attraction?

Mr. Speaker, I imagine that before we engage in these large capital projects that some sort of cost benefit analysis is performed. Mr. Speaker, I would love to see the actual particulars of the cost benefit analysis done on this \$51 million project. It just seems to me to be a little high, and I would tell you why, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since the Caves of Barbados has been formed, it has actually been losing money. There is nothing wrong with that I supposed, but if you are getting 150 000 people a year, even before you have invested your \$50 million, that means that you are getting revenue of about \$3 million a year and your expenses are still in excess of that. What is it that is going to happen now, having spent this money, that would earn that much more for you?

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the relatively high running cost of the Cave, you now have this near US\$17 million loan to service. Mr. Speaker, I think these are some good questions that could be asked because if it is our premier tourist attraction and "Tourism Is Our Business", one would think that it should make business sense running...

Mr. SPEAKER: You said US\$70 million?

Mr. R. L. SEALY: I said US\$17 million.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sorry to interrupt you then.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: I believe the exact figure is \$16.8 million.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: I said just under \$17 million for purposes of the debate. What I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to get some more details on these issues. I believe that is the role of the Opposition. There is nothing wrong with supporting ideas but at the same time someone has to ask some questions about the dollars and cents here. Mr. Speaker, apart from the actual viability of this particular attraction, a natural question one would ask...

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other attractions, some of them just as unique as Harrison's Cave that could do with some investment as well. The perfect example would be the kissing cousin to Harrison's Cave, the Animal Flower Cave. That site really needs some development. It is a dingy building that has a bar that doubles as a welcome centre and so on.

Mr. Speaker, it is good that the youngsters from the St. Lucy area are able to ply their craft and so on there, but I am saying that a fraction of the money that is being spent here could have gone into making that Animal Flower Cave a bit more attractive to help the community. In the same way that the people of St. Thomas are benefiting, the people of St. Lucy would be glad to see such benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the plan is to have a botanical garden centre at Waterford but there are a number of botanical attractions already in Barbados, Andromeda Gardens, the Flower Forest, Orchid World and all of the attractions that are all run by the Barbados National Trust, are all screaming out for some investment. I am just questioning whether or not \$50 million in one attraction, that is already getting \$3 million a year in revenue and would get more because they are increasing the price from \$30 to \$40 per visitors, really makes good dollar sense.

Hon. C. A. MASCOLL: On a point of elucidation. Mr. Speaker, I feel a sense of honour that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central has given way. Let me say this just to put this investment into context, Mr. Speaker, because he is questioning the investment of \$51 million.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to suggest that whenever you analyse or assess an investment in the Barbadian context that brings in foreign exchange, you always have to do

what we call in Economics shadow pricing of the foreign exchange, that is, once a company, even a private sector company, earns foreign exchange it gets some additional benefits through the tax system because of the value of that US dollar or the Pound to the Barbados economy. So in relation to this investment, whenever you are seeking to analyse the \$51 million at the Cave you have to take into consideration that it is one of those areas that earns foreign exchange on behalf of the economy and for the Government of Barbados, so you cannot simply use that gauge as though you would for any other company in making that assessment.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, it is precisely for that reason that I highlighted the potential with respect to the other attractions. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South mentioned that a lot of the visitors who go to the Harrison's Cave are short stay visitors who come here on a vessel for a day.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Somebody mentioned it. I heard an Honourable Member on that side mentioned it. It was the Honourable Member for St. Michael South that mentioned that the cruise visitors tend to be highly attracted to Harrison's Cave.

Sir, that very reason that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West gracefully offered to this Chamber, is the reason we should invest in some of the other attractions because a cruise visitor does not have the benefit as a long-stay visitor to go attraction hopping. They look at a list usually in the morning just before the boat docks and decide, do I want to go and see some botanical attractions; do I want to go and see a cave; do I want to go water skiing; or do I want to want to go and play golf. Mr. Speaker, they cannot do all, so they have to choose one, and it is for that very reason that I think that our product range should be developed. Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South speaking about wealth. He is now endorsing the concept of community tourism as espoused by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

House 137 Sequence 24

3.00 p.m.

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Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I remember there was a time when the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was the laughing stock of that idea. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is laughing because he was on this side, when the Honourable Member for St. Lucy used to be belittled for preaching something he was living,

through his business in Half Moon Fort, St. Lucy. Sir, I am suggesting to spread the wealth; the same concept we are suddenly hearing about, let us spend some of that money on other attractions. It seems to me that \$50 million appears to be a bit much to be spent in that area alone.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, we, therefore, need to look at our investment and to determine whether or not it is, in fact, going to be money well-spent. Sir, what I would say is that one has noticed that the expenses at the Caves seem somewhat high, and I am wondering if, during the course of this redevelopment and restructuring... Sir, as I understand it, cost is not the only factor associated with the redevelopment of the Cave, I understand there are other issues. I heard about people being severed, therefore, I would trust that we would have a leaner and meaner Cave as well and that it would be somewhat more financially viable, in terms of the future and how it is able to maintain itself.

Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that money is everything, I am simply saying these are questions that we have to ask. Sir, we know when we do not ask questions what happens down the road. We know there would be a number of apologies that would be offered. We know there would be supplementaries coming to this House, or we would be told that the Cave have reached some saturation point and that all that was expected had not occurred. I think we need to look carefully at how we go about spending these monies.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see something done for the other attractions as well, so that if you are taking the whole concept of tourism into the communities, not only the ones in the immediate surroundings of St. Thomas should benefit but that all communities in Barbados should benefit. Furthermore, that more of the money that comes into this country could actually stay here.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister will now wind up.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, let me express gratitude to all Honourable Members who spoke in this debate. Sir, I would wish to address those issues which were raised, but I would wish to say that not every issue raised is worthy of detaining the House with, but those which are worthy, I will address.

Mr. Speaker, a number of questions were asked about the percentage of visitors to the Cave, what was the constituent breakdown of visitors to the Cave, and what element of the visitors were short-stay or cruise passengers. Sir, in 2004, there were 161 576 visitors to the Cave - 48 473 or 30 per cent were cruise passengers, 105 023, or 65 per cent, were long-stay visitors and

8 080, or 5 per cent, were local visitors.

In 2005, there were 105 524 visitors, and Honourable Members would recall that is the year when we had difficulties with the aging tram fleet. Sir, 31 657 were cruise passengers, 68 591 were long-stay passengers, and 5 276 were locals.

Sir, the 2006 year, which was an incomplete one, because we closed during that year for our redevelopment programme. During the period which we were opened, which was approximately six months, there were 57 731 visitors, of which 17 320 were cruise passengers, 37 525 were long-stay and 2 886 were locals. Sir, I believe that addresses the issue of the breakdown.

Mr. Speaker, commensurate with this, I would want to speak to the issue of pricing policy, as this is a matter which detained the Board and I, for some time. Sir, on the question of pricing, which was one of the issues raised today, there was the consideration of structure, viability and underpinning philosophy. A determination was made, as has happened at other tourism facilities across the Caribbean and across the world, that a differential pricing structure would be used and that a higher price would be charged to tourists, who were using stronger currencies or currencies with a favourable exchange rate to the Barbados dollar. Sir, as an example, BDS\$30 is less than £10 and approximately US\$15 but it is still \$30 to persons living in Barbados. Therefore, a differential pricing structure could be accommodated.

Sir, we want to have a situation where the number of Barbadians, who come to the Cave every day, is still a relatively large number. Sir, I certainly felt strongly that we should price the product out of the reach of the average Barbadian because their tax dollars would be repaying the loans anyway, along with the revenues from the Cave. Therefore, I believe we should have a pricing structure, which would allow Barbadians to be able to go to the Cave, without feeling that it is outside of their price reach or that they could not afford it, and that it is for tourists and not for them.

Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, pressed on the Board, who has finally accepted, but there was some level of resistance. Sir, I think that Boards must understand that they cannot resist the ministers on matters of policy. Sir, on matters of this policy, I was very clear what the underpinning and

driving philosophy had to be. Sir, in my view, Barbados must be, first of all, for Barbadians. We must not feel that, despite the fact our navel strings are buried here, that there are some things that are too good for us, or that there are some things from which we must be excluded. This is our product, Harrison's Cave is a Barbadian facility, it is part of the patrimony of the country, it is part of our national heritage and generations now and coming, if it is cared for, would be able to enjoy it.

Sir, I was absolutely clear that Barbadians must continued to be welcomed to the Cave, even though it is now an improved high-tech, high-quality facility, and that it must be affordable to them. Sir, we are practising a differential pricing structure. The Board resisted and said that the Caribbean Development Bank would be vexed, but I pointed out to them that we are repaying the Caribbean Development Bank and therefore we must determine as Government, what must be the policy. Therefore, the Caribbean Development Bank cannot put us in a position where we are to tell Barbadians that they are not to be able to afford not to come to the Cave. I was very clear.

Mr. Speaker, we are practising a differential pricing structure as between tourists and locals. I believe that I have also encouraged this at other facilities, which are being operated by National Conservation Commission, on the behalf of the taxpayers. It is a pricing philosophy for which I do not apologise.

3.10 p.m.

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Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, that deals with the issue of pricing structure and policy and though it true that we have a loan to repay, we are going to be able to maximise our earnings by putting value-added goods into the products such as souvenirs, memorabilia, concessions for the restaurants and other facilities that would go out to the public for revenue generating purposes. Sir, that is where we are in relation to the pricing structure.

Mr. Speaker, it is a reality that many construction projects take time. Sir, Government, because of the size of their projects and the cost involved, attracts a high degree of criticism when there are cost overruns but, Sir, sometimes you have to make changes to a project when it is under execution. When plans are drawn, you see the plans at the level of a plan, it is simple that, but once you start to build out a project, it occurs to you that something could be done to improve it; that something could be done to add to it or some alteration made, which leads to good practical occupation and use and, Sir, sometimes making those changes in a construction setting have a high cost.

Mr. Speaker, part of the cost we have to deal with, in relation to this project, is the fact that we did not have access to the lands that we needed at the time that we needed them so that the contractors mobilised and found themselves waiting to access land at the time when they were ready to use it in the project and there is a cost to that. Sir, that happened because we were taking cognisance of the concerns of persons, who had lived on lands and own land for many years and who were being made to lose part of their lands to facilitate this national project.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any evidence, although this is a line being pushed repeatedly by the Opposition, that there is tremendous squandermania and massive cost overruns in projects as a result of recklessness. Sir, I do not think there is any evidence of that at all, in fact, you would find that this project has been very well managed by the officer, who has responsibility on behalf of the Government of Barbados, Mr. Steve Devonish, who is a trained architect, who has been working with it from the point of conceptualisation to now that we are at the implementation stage. It is a large project, it has been complex because of the many fibers in the thread from which we were attempting to weave a fabric that is acceptable, environmentally, ecologically, socially and economically, and it has been a complex project for a single person to carry. He has carried it on his slim shoulders without shrinking and without resiling from the responsibilities, which are his under the project and has carried it in a way that is generally, fiscally responsible.

Mr. Speaker, if there are variations in the project cost, I would be full and frank with this House and with the public of Barbados in respect of how those overruns, if they are any, have been occasioned and ask for the understanding of the public. Those persons, who have been involved in construction projects, even if it is a dog kennel you are building at home, the day that the mason is on the site but the carpenter does not turn up to take off the boxing, or the day that both the carpenter and the mason are on the site but the cement was not delivered on time or the man delivering the blocks has gone to do another job and has not got to you, you have a cost overrun for that day because the mason and the carpenter sat for that day, did nothing but you still have to pay them for being on the site but the materials for which you are paying did not come. Sir, those are small projects because I am talking about a dog kennel or as we say in Barbados, a dog house, which might cause you a few hundred dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I am simply trying to use common, simple examples, which are not high cost and extrapolate from them the core principles and then apply them to these projects. Sir, the issues are exacerbated when you move from a \$10 000 project to a project that is \$50 000. Sir, there are large complex projects and there are things that are not going to happen absolutely on schedule not because

there is any degree of mismanagement, not because there is 'steal in there' or any degree of chicanery but simple because when you are managing projects, there is always some level of loss or slippage. Sir, that is just the way a project is and it has nothing to do with squandermania, impropriety or anything else of the sort.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the matter of Chinese workers. We are working in a globalised environment and China is the largest single investor in the economy of the United States of America and the United Kingdom, that is the reality of the modern world. Sir, India is the second largest single investor in the economy of the United Kingdom. We are living in a world where people are going all over the place, where traditional ownership patterns are changing; where economies are changing; where the movement of capital and the movement of human capital have changed from the traditional avenues that they traversed. Hence, we are seeing some of those changes in our economy and what Barbadians have to do is to equip themselves, bid and be available to do all the jobs.

Mr. Speaker, while the Government is abused for the fact that we are using Chinese workers, albeit by an open and transparent process on which Barbadians were at liberty to bid and did not or certainly did not prequalify, the reality is that Chinese workers also build the National Union of Public Workers headquarters on Dalkeith Road, and they were in a position to use Barbadian labour. I believe there are people whose membership fees they are taking, that they use to build that project. Sir, that is part of the reality of the project.

MR. SPEAKER: Enough of that, please.

Mr. Speaker, so far the project is more or less on schedule. We have had some slippage as a result of not having access to the lands. Sir, when we reopen in November, though we will have a product which is available for use by the public, locals and tourists alike, we fully anticipate that work would continue on about June of next year but we will keep this Chamber and the wider public up to date on the timetable and any cost changes that they are. There are so far no horrendous price escalations, which at this stage I am aware of or would be obligated to inform the House.

Mr. Speaker, there are two more points and I will close. The penultimate one was raised by an Honourable Member on the other side and it had to do with why not invest in other tourism attractions. Sir, this is not an either/or type of investment. We are making an investment is what is the premier, national and natural tourism attraction in the island. Sir, on all three counts, it ranks No. 1, national, natural and tourist. Therefore, the expenditure can be justified because there is a revenue stream from which you can draw to pay off the loan. Sir, this always has

to be a consideration because people complain about paying more taxes but if you cannot generate a revenue stream at the fountain head, then you cannot, outside of some sort of tax regime, pay for the project.

Mr. Speaker, we determine that Harrison's Cave was a project, which could pay for itself with little support from the Government, hence that is the project in which we are investing. Secondly, the quality of the facility itself attracted this kind of investment, if we were to move it forward to make it ready as a world-class tourism facility, which would signify what we are trying to attempt as the Barbados brand.

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Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, the Barbados brand has to be made up of a number of constituent world-class elements, of which Harrison's Cave would be one. Sir, another would be the way we behave as a people, our attitude, service excellence, the quality of our language, the quality of goods and services, the quality of our exports, the business culture, that we nurture in the country. There are many constituent elements, but producing a world class facility at this site was one of them.

Sir, further, the Honourable Member suggested that you could have divided the money and given somewhere else piece. That is poor thinking. As a matter of fact, I am not sure it is thinking at all. I believe that the Honourable Member came in, saw the opportunity to say something and said what first popped into his head, without reflecting on it. Sir, you could take the money and give a little piece here, there, and somewhere else, and do all of the projects badly, or you could take the money and complete one or two world class projects at a time, competently, then moving onto the next one.

Sir, we did Kensington, and we have done it well. We are restoring Harrison's Cave. We are preparing the National Botanical Garden. Sir, at the same time, at Farley Hill, we are working to improve that project. There are many others being worked on simultaneously, but each one must have what it deserves, to bring it up the required standard. You cannot give this one a little pinch and the next one a squeeze, dropping a little piece for another and so. It is not about each one having a turn. It is about each one having a turn at the appropriate time when it can be properly done, otherwise you are wasting the money. Sir, if you patch up an old floor, rather than change the entire floor, or change only a piece of a roof or a window, rather than the door, which has a water leak. In effect, you are not doing anything that makes prudent management sense.

Therefore, we are taking the sensible management approach, rather than the piecemeal, bit by bit, approach, as advocated by the Honourable Member on the other side, who made his suggestions.

Sir, finally, there was an issue raised about tours. I do not recall exactly in what way it was raised, and I apologise for that. I simply wrote the word "tours". I want to inform the Honourable House that one of our considerations for Cave is a multiplicity of tour-types. Sir, for some persons who are interested in a certain type of product and experience, and we all want different types of experiences, there has been discussion of a wild cave tour, a night tour where you may use torch lights, use the gully entrance, rather than the manmade entrance, where you will drop through the cave opening into the water, different types of experiences for the wild cave tour.

Sir, there has been discussion about a walk-in tour, a tour where you will have a heritage walk, instead of driving through the cave in the trams, which of course places stress on them. They are those who would love the opportunity to be able to do the two or three-mile walk through the cave. That is an option that is being explored and discussed.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas raised the point of night tours. We experimented with night tours, and would be willing to try them again. The night tours, particularly on moonlight nights were pretty and exciting. We had music, lending a real tropical atmosphere, and the visitors were much impressed with the night tours. Sir, persons from the community prepared traditional food. You could have bought pork chops, fried fish, and all of the things for which you do to "Moon Town", or if you wanted to avoid the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, avoid 'Moon Town', but might want instead to go to Oistin or Ferniehurst. Those were the kinds of offerings that we made available to the public, during the night tours.

Sir, it is a project that, with marketing, we can try again, but the appropriate marketing effort would have to be made to have the numbers and the throughput, to justify the operation cost. Sir, bringing staff at night, means additional money, then there is additional stress on the cave, et cetera, therefore, whatever you do, it is only fair that a cost benefit analysis should be done, to make the appropriate planning and action decisions, in the context of what is economically and ecologically sustainable.

Sir, I think this has been a wide ranging, but interesting debate. All in all, we have had, in my view, relatively substantial interventions. I close by thanking all Honourable Members who spoke. Again, I thank all Boards, managers, Permanent Secretaries and those members of staff of the Cave and those who have been involved in this redevelopment process. I look forward, in

November, to unveiling, to the public, the new world-class facility that would be Harrison's Cave.

Sir, we want to thank the Caribbean Development Bank for its loan facility and to assure the commitment of the Government and Ministry to executing this project well, as far as we can within budget, and in the appropriate time.

I very much oblige to you, Sir.

I beg to move 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.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government business for today. I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, June 19, 2007, at 10.00 a.m.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House do now adjourn to Tuesday, June 19, 2007, at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

15.27 p.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. Order No. 6, Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson, cost of the project. The cost items are given as ‘A capital works programme at \$27 126 000 008’, ‘Issues of severance, which amounted to \$1 150 000 000’ and ‘the total sum here is \$31 984 000 387’, against a stated cost of BDS\$33.73 million; the figures appear to be mistyped. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 6, reply, Mr. Speaker. Under the label ‘MR. SPEAKER’ the words ‘Enough of that, please.’ are followed by three paragraphs (about 300 words, ‘Mr. Speaker, so far the project is more or less on schedule...’) that appear to be the Minister’s reply continuing. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Heading, Order No. 6. The Order title is printed as a paragraph, with only its last words ‘TO REDEVELOP HARRISON’S CAVE.’ set as the heading. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 6, Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson. The Minister twice refers to the measure as ‘this Bill’, although the Order is a Resolution to approve a guarantee. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 6, Mr. R. L. Sealy. Mr. Speaker queries ‘US\$70 million’ and Mr. Sealy replies ‘US\$17 million’ and ‘\$16.8 million’; the Order gives the principal as 16 866 000 United States dollars. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Prayers. The officiant is given as ‘Rev. Cannon Ivan Harewood’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 12th June, 2007, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair; prayers were led by Rev. Canon Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of 5th June, 2007 were confirmed. Hon. G. A. Clarke laid the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Transport Board for 2005-2006, and Hon. N. A. Lynch laid those of the Barbados Conference Services Limited for

the year ended 31st March, 1999. On the motion of Hon. R. R. Farley, Standing Orders were suspended for the rest of the Sitting.

The only Order taken was Order No. 6, the Resolution to approve the guarantee by the Minister of Finance of a loan of US\$16 866 000 to be borrowed by Caves of Barbados Ltd. from the Caribbean Development Bank to redevelop Harrison’s Cave. Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson, Member for St. James South, said the Cave, opened in 1981 with a projection of 100 000 visitors a year, had soon received as many as 190 000. The work was a physical upgrade, not the opening of new caverns, costed at BDS\$33.73 million including capital works, operations, furniture and equipment, severance for staff laid off while the Cave was closed for more than 13 weeks, and contingency. She spoke of a nature trail, new lighting, land acquisitions, dumping in the nearby gully and staff training, and looked to reopening in November.

Mr. R. D. Jones said the Opposition would raise questions rather than hostility, among them procurement and the use of a Chinese contractor; the Minister twice rose on points of elucidation about the Graeme Hall designation and the opening of the Cave during Cricket World Cup. Hon. C. A. Mascoll stressed the Cave’s foreign earning capacity and its potential for surrounding communities, and was repeatedly warned by Mr. Speaker over remarks about Members opposite until his time expired. The Sitting was suspended from about 12.30 p.m. until 1.30 p.m.

On resumption, Hon. Miss C. Y. Forde, Member for St. Thomas, welcomed the project, spoke of residents’ concerns about royalties and shafts, called for sidewalks and community vigilance, and thanked the residents of Allen View, Sturges, Bloomsbury, Welchman Hall and other districts. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman asked how the gap between a \$51 million project and a \$33 million loan would be financed and whether overruns were likely; the Minister replied on a point of order that the Order Paper dealt only with the loan and that other elements, such as the trams, were Government financed.

Hon. N. A. Lynch congratulated the Ministry, said tourism numbers had risen by 100 000 a year on average over the decade, and was required by Mr. Speaker to withdraw remarks about Mr. Kellman. Mr. R. L. Sealy questioned whether \$51 million was money well spent, noting that the Caves of Barbados had been losing money even with 150 000 visitors and revenue of about \$3 million a year, and asked for the cost benefit analysis.

In reply, Miss Thompson denied any evidence of ‘squandermania’, credited the project officer, Mr. Steve

Devonish, defended the use of Chinese workers under an open process, said the project was more or less on schedule, and described plans for wild cave, walk-in and night tours. The Resolution was agreed without division,

and on the motion of Mr. Farley, seconded by Hon. A. P. Wood, the House adjourned until Tuesday, 19th June, 2007 at 10.00 a.m.