
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 9, 2008

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on

PRESENT

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, B.A., LL.B. (Speaker)

His Honour K. St.C. BEST, LL.B.(Hons.), L.E.C. (Deputy Speaker)

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.)(Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Investment, Labour, Civil Service and Energy)

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., LL.M. (Leic), LL.B. (Hons.), B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed.,

Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.) His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (Leader of the Opposition)

Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.

Hon. R. D. JONES, J.P., M.A. (Ed.),B.A. (Hons.) (Minister of Education and Human Resource Development), (Leader of the House)

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, M.B.B.S., B.Sc., (Minister of Economic Affairs, Empowerment, Innovation, Trade, Industry and Commerce)

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Dr. W. F. DUGUID, J.P., B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S., FDRCS

Hon. R. L. SEALY, M.B.A., B.Sc. (Minister of Tourism)

Hon. F. J. STUART, Q.C., B.A., LL.M. (Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, M.Sc. (C. Eng.)(Minister of Transport and Works)

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, F.C.C.A., C.A. (Minister of International Business and International Transport)

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT, (Minister of Community Development and Culture)

Mr. J. D. PAUL, B.Sc.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B. (Hons.)

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc., (Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development)

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, M.B.A., B.Sc. (Minister of Health)

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, M.Sc., B.A., (Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, Urban and Rural Development)

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, M.B.B.S. (Minister of Youth, Family and Sports)

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, November 25, 2008.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its Meeting of Tuesday, November 25, 2008, be confirmed subject to any omissions, corrections and/or observations.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir. Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.

PAPERS

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Prime Minister, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Public Service (General) Order, 2008. 2. Public Service (Part-Time Officers) Order, 2008. 3. Public Service (Teachers) Order, 2008. 4. Judges Remuneration and Pensions (Salaries), Order, 2008. 5. Judges Remuneration and Pensions (Conditions of Service and Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations, 2008.
6. Ombudsman (Salary) Order, 2008.
7. Supreme Court (Master of the High Court) (Salary) Order, 2008. 8. Senate and House of Assembly (Remuneration and Allowances of Members), Order 2008. 9. Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries (Remuneration and Allowances) Order, 2008; and 10 Parliament (Administration) (Salary) Order, 2008.

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10.20 a.m.

December 09, 2008

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Annual Report of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) for the year ending March 31, 2008.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2008, be read a first time.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 4 – SECOND READING OF THE TRANSPORT BOARD (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2008.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to move the Second Reading of the Transport Board Act, Cap. 297, to increase the number of members of the Transport Board. Mr. Speaker, this simple amendment is that Section 5 of the Transport Board Act, referred to as the Principal Act, is amended in sub-section (1) by deleting the words “such number of members, not being more than seven,” and substituting the words “such number of members, not being more than nine”.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment, though simple in nature, would obviously give the Minister the opportunity to introduce more skills to the decision-making of the Board. Although, as I indicated, it may appear at first look to be a very straightforward position, it is an opportunity to put more skills into the Transport Board Act.

On this occasion, we are going to be looking at suitable persons to introduce more information into the Board's decision about what is commonly referred to as areas of local, where there is that experience in the business of transport, which would include commuters, who are also important, their experience and intimate knowledge of the challenges at the Transport Board. We, on This Side, are acutely aware of these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, in so doing, the Board and its members will be in a position to carry on the already trended policies of this Democratic Labour Party, which, of course, are already well recorded. Sir, I can speak to the successes in respect to the championing of the workers at the Transport Board. Therefore, this is a deliberate policy which we have adopted as part of our campaign to improve.

We are committed on a clear understanding that unless we take people along with us, that we will achieve very little. We cannot continue with this so prevalent approach of the top/down management approach, but we need to hear from our workers, our commuters, from those who literally turn the nuts and bolts at the Transport Board on a daily basis.

Mr. Speaker, it was because of this that we were able to steer a so different course to that being charted by the Barbados Labour Party, while they handled the affairs of this country. Sir, that was spelt out in their Manifesto of 2008, where the highlight of their Transport Board policy was, I believe, 50 buses a year, which was a kind of a written rule.

Mr. Speaker, we would have been committing capital all the time, without really looking at what we have.

Sir, we said no, that this was not necessarily the only way to go. Sir, we have a situation where we had 309 buses, of which as many as 125, at one time, would have been laid up between the Transport Board yard at Weymouth, Mangrove and allegedly with the repair services in this country. We said no, this cannot work.

Mr. Speaker, depending in terms of how one looks at the age of the equipment, one would say they were old buses, because they were 10 years ago, but if you were to go to other parts of the world, in modern developed societies, you would see transportation that is 15 and 20 years old, being plied on the streets of those countries, in useful business exercise.

Do not let us draw the example of the Mother Country, as we refer to the United Kingdom, where the famous double-decker buses are 50 or 70 years old in some cases. Sir, I stand to be corrected by the Honourable Member for St. James North, who is so well-learned in the areas of history, who always guides us accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, that approach of “mash up and buy back” not in anyway speaking disparagingly of the artist’s work, but the approach of the Barbados Labour Party that they could mash up and buy back anything, was one which we said no to. We said in the case of our transport system, we could do better than this, and we looked at the situation and identified the particular need in each case. In this way, we were able to boast a complement of ready buses as high as 275 at one time.

Mr. Speaker, I am not, for one moment, suggesting that total should necessarily sustain us. I believe that with a structured approach to maintenance, it could be sustained, especially in an environment where the overall age of the vehicle stock is not beyond usefulness. That is the point that must be made. Sir, with the correct approach to maintenance and the purchasing of spare parts, this could be sustained.

Mr. Speaker, we took this action because we had a programme for the people of Barbados. We had a programme which had to be rolled out in a timely fashion, not when some financier felt it was the correct time, not when somebody in a far-away land could get something ready to be shipped to Barbados, but in time to bring the greatest effect to our school children. Sir, as you know on September 1, we rolled out the free school children bus service on all Transport Board vehicles.

10.30 a.m.

Sir, that is now history but it is a history which the Democratic Labour Party will forever treasure and, Sir, we will trumpet it over the hills and the valleys of this country and help us to distinguish between the approach of us on

This Side, a responsible caring Administration, the Democratic Labour Party and the Honourable Members on That Side, who left shambles in many ways, and Sir, we may get to that as we continue.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we do not for one moment under-estimate the magnitude of the task ahead of us. Sir, constantly we are reviewing our systems and, only yesterday, in our monthly Management Review, we looked at the question of the ridership and the response, not only from users of the transport system, the commuters itself but from the schools, whose headteachers and whose teachers would be best placed to comment on the situation. Mr. Speaker, what has been the story on ridership? Sir, in September of 2007, the school rider-ship was approximately 274 000 rides. In September of 2008, that figure was 612 909, a 123 per cent increase. Sir, we did not buy a bus, but we spent about \$0.5 million to repair the buses. We did not buy a bus, but we spent some money and employed people, so we fully expect that the subsidy, which we paid the Transport Board will obviously be increased.

Sir, also remember that we were at the time dealing with the question of increased fuel prices, so even that went on top of our programme but, Sir, we said we were there with a programme, that the people were in front of us and that the people were leading. We lead for the people and not for ourselves and so, we had 123 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, in October, that figure dropped to 507 000 and we need to explain these figures. Sir, in looking at what happened, there was a lot of excitement by the children and these children were riding two times and three times enjoying the opportunity. Sir, we do not have a difficulty with that, but now the figures are settling down and November looks almost the same. The figures are settling down around that 500 000 rides, an increase over October of the previous year of some 24 per cent and, Honourable Members should clap for this.

Mr. Speaker, we are on target to make sure that our school children get to school in a safe and healthy way. Sir, we have challenges and, as intimated, the reports of the schools are, that although there is a tremendous improvement, deviance is still a situation, which we have to deal with and, Sir, to my mind, that is only natural. One did not, for any moment, contemplate that by introducing the free school service, we would have necessarily corrected every deviant situation that we would encounter and there will be situations to encounter from time to time.

Sir, the basis for school operation has been laid, the demonstration of how it can be done has been put in place, the workers who are making it happen have been suitably motivated and continue to be suitably motivated and selected for a task which has a high level of responsibility.

Sir, sometimes we do not give enough respect and regard to these kinds of situations, where we have bus drivers and operators of private sector vehicles, who take the public to and from their places of work, who have a tremendous responsibility in making sure this is done in a regular, effective, efficient and most important, a safe way. Sir, we congratulate those employees for that.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we continue to gather data on this situation. Indeed, the initial process of rolling out the free school service was not by guess. It was by careful analysis, working with the University of the West Indies and the staff of the Transport Board, to ensure that we accurately or as near as accurately as possible predicted the rider-ship. Sir, that is why on the first day of school in September, we were able to take almost every school child that wanted to avail themselves of that service.

Mr. Speaker, what are the benefits? Sir, besides the obvious of getting to school in a healthy state, the tremendous benefit is that you are directly freeing up capital for the parents of these children to utilise in another form. Sir, in some cases, to augment their lunches and their school bus because, as parliamentarians, we know only too well, about the need to help our communities and constituents in making sure they could take the greatest opportunity of this free education offering, which this Democratic Labour Party, by coincidence and also by deliberate coincidence, was also responsible for introducing in the year 1961.

Sir, again this is not a light matter. We recognise that we have to maintain a situation where these students can take the greatest opportunity of this beautiful work, the opportunity to have free primary, secondary and tertiary education to all Barbadians. Therefore, the parents of these young children would have been able to save some dollars to ensure that their children are properly clothed, adequately fed and had the current complement of text books and material that they may need for total utilisation.

Mr. Speaker, the policies we have pursued in transport have continued to reflect this. Sir, even in a situation, where we recognise that one of the benefits too, would have been bringing most of these school children off what we identified as the less than best service offered by some, the Private Sector Vehicle (PSV) operators.

Sir, even then, in the midst of the fuel crisis, so as to demonstrate to this very important sector of Barbados, we introduced a relief package for the private sector vehicles, so that they could fuel up at the Transport Board Terminal, at the Weymouth Terminal and at the Mangrove Terminal. They could, in effect, save by doing this, \$0.20 per litre in Excise Tax, \$0.08 per litre as a direct subsidy and \$7.90 per litre as an indirect subsidy, a total of \$35.09 per litre. Sir,

we are seeing the benefits of the policy of the Democratic Labour Party in terms of the energy situation.

Mr. Speaker, in today's newspaper again, we see another reduction in fuel prices, because we have said to Barbados that this is the policy going forward. Sir, put it this way. We want to get closer to understanding what we mean by conservation. We want to get closer to understanding what we mean by the efficient use of energy and we are saying to you, be your best managers.

10.40 a.m.

If you learn to conserve, it means that in times when the price is high and is passed on, we will take those steps and measures, in the way we do things, to effect the greatest savings possible. When there is a price reduction, it is directly passed on to the people of Barbados, Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Sir, it has been so effective, that if you reflect on what is happening in some of the countries that took a different route, in some Caribbean countries where a different route was taken, they now find themselves grappling with situations which are totally untenable, and most of all, unacceptable by the population.

Sir, the Barbadian public has us to judge for this and as far as I am concerned, I have seen a very solid policy, one which I can associate with and the Democratic Labour Party associates with, that is we give the management of the resources the amount of energy we consume, the choice of whether we drive or catch the bus, the choice of whether we turn our lights on or off, as necessary. We give that decision to the people so that, as they say, they cut their cloth to suit their size. Sir, they are responsible people.

Sir, the Transport Board, as it continues its work, will be going into our villages. We constantly receive communications from residents and Members of Parliament, which are discussed at our meetings sometimes, the need to get into the villages and re-examine our routing. I can speak about areas like Carter's Gap, St. Christopher and Rendezvous, where I am the Representative. I have the honour of representing those good people.

These are areas which have been totally neglected and for the most part, have been dealt with expediently by the Barbados Labour Party. They lay on the services as it draws closer to an election period, and when the election period is over, they drop these services, as if the people really do not matter.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is knowingly and willfully misleading this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is unparliamentary to accuse an Honourable Member of willfully misleading the House. You ought to withdraw that statement.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Sir, I withdraw that statement and I am now saying that the Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member knows full well that the No. 15 bus was replaced by the Transport Board, returned to the route before the Election, and remains on the route 11 months after. Sir, for him to suggest that routes are put on and then removed after an election is misleading the House. I ask that he withdraw those remarks.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, I thank the Honourable Member for making my point, because the only reason the Route 15 bus is still on the Route, 11 months after the Election, is because we are the Government. That is the precise point I was making. So I am grateful to the Honourable Member.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. The Sturges bus which runs the Lion Castle/Sturges/Highland route was put in place more than three years ago and that bus is still on the route. Therefore, it is untrue for the Honourable Member to accuse the former Administration of putting it on for Elections and then taking it off.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, again, I find no point of order, because the Honourable Member is making his statements. I did not hear him refer specifically to any particular bus. Although you may draw what you wish from what he said.

Secondly, it is also unparliamentary to accuse an Honourable Member of speaking an untruth, essentially. You ought to withdraw the statement.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I withdraw the word "untrue". The Honourable Member made the statement that the buses have been put on for political reasons. That is what I understood from it, and as soon as the political season goes there are withdrawn. There are a number of other cases that can be mentioned. Sir, the information does not give a true reflection of what the Honourable Member said took place before. I would wish him to withdraw it, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot see why he should be asked to withdraw a statement, even if what you are saying is, in fact, the correct situation. You will have the opportunity when you address the Chamber to put your side of the story. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Sir, the Honourable Member made a statement that is misleading to this House. The Honourable Member indicated that the Barbados Labour Party put on buses prior to elections for political purposes and once the Election was gone, it would be withdrawn. The Honourable Member could not be speaking the truth, because not only has the Honourable Member referred to Sturges, but in the case of Friendship Terrace, behind BIM, the bus was put on the route and it still has been running for the last 5 years, in this case the last 5 years. The Honourable Member was not in this Chamber when the bus for Jackson Terrace Stage 11 was put on prior to the....

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to make a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: I understand the point of order that has been made.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I have not finished.

Mr. SPEAKER: I can anticipate where you are going. Honourable Member, please. Honourable Member, I have already addressed the point with respect to two Honourable Members who rose on a point. It seems to me, you may well have examples where it did not happen and you are free to bring those examples.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, that is what I am trying to do.

Mr. SPEAKER: It did not happen. You are free to bring those examples to this Chamber's attention when it is your time to address this Chair.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, as a matter of privilege, I am entitled...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are not to speak when I am speaking. I am saying that based on my understanding, I can find nothing wrong with what the Honourable Member said. In terms of your rising on a point of order, so rule.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of privilege. Sir, when this Honourable House met for the first time in this Session, the rights of Honourable Members were held and claimed. Mr. Speaker, it is unknown in my almost 18 years of parliamentary service, in both This House and the Other Place, for a Member of this Chamber to be prevented from completing a point of order. I was in mid sentence in relation to the point of order, and the point

of order is clearly one that relates to an Honourable Member misleading this Chamber.

Sir, when the Government was on This Side, they were not prevented from making points of order. Even if you want to rule me out of order, I have the right to make the point of order, in the same way you have the right to rule me out of order if you so deem, but what I would not surrender, and not for myself alone, but for any Honourable Member of this House, is the right to be able to make a point of order, pursuant to the Rules of this Chamber.

There is no doctrine of anticipatory breach that is known to the Rules of this House. There is no doctrine of anticipatory breach that is known to any of the parliamentary procedures, set out either in May's or in the Australian Practice Book, both of which guide the procedure in this House.

Sir, it is the right of any Honourable Member who thinks that such a breach has been committed to rise in his place, interrupting any Member who may be speaking, and direct the attention of the Chair to the matter.

Sir, I quote from Erskine May's on Parliamentary Practice, page 396, under the Rubic Right of Members to direct the attention of the Chair to supposed breach of Orders. In the circumstances, I claim, therefore, today the right of all Honourable Members in this Chamber, whether on This Side or That Side to be able to make a point of order and to complete a sentence, without the Chair interrupting me to determine that the point of order is out of order before such a point is made. You cannot, even with all the hubris of the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, determine what is in my mind to say and how it is to be said, Sir.

10.50 a.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, with respect, it is your right to rule me out of order, but consistent with the Laws of natural justice, the Rules of Parliament indicate that it is also my right to complete my point of order. Sir, I therefore claim that right in here today, now.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, arising out of your statements, I wish to draw your attention to a number of things. One of which is that the Chair must be heard in silence, and you have breached that constantly in here this morning, when I was trying to indicate to you my ruling.

Secondly, as far as I am aware, the Standing Orders do not give you the right to question the ruling of the Chair, in the manner in which you have just done and this is not the first time you have done it.

Thirdly, I, as His Honour, the Presiding Officer, it has been thrust upon me and I have accepted the right to rule what is out of order and what is in order and I have so ruled. I will not accept your effectively castigating the Chair in this manner again.

There are Rules set down. There is a procedure in place. You have been a Member of the House much longer than I have been, and we all know that and you know the rules for questioning the ruling. As has happened before, it is very popular for Members to stand on a point of order when essentially what you are doing is just putting in some kind of information, which can be put in at another time. I have been tolerant with respect to that, but I have ruled that there is no point of order in the way you have suggested and I so rule. Let us continue with the matter before the Chamber.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: You spoke with other matters which I did not address, including my failure to remain silent when you are speaking. If that was the case, Sir, I apologise for that, but I have stood in here, on a point of privilege that was claimed, as has been claimed by every Parliament meeting in this country since this Parliament was established.

I am asking you, Sir, for a ruling on the point of privilege that a Member has the right to stand in his or her place and to address a point of order, without having that point of order being curtailed, on the basis of the doctrine of anticipatory breach. Sir, you said you knew what I was going to say and you did not allow me to complete the statement. In the circumstances, I am asking for the right to complete my statement. It is a fundamental right of Members, because it will affect the conduct of all debates in the Chamber and all rights, whether it is the Government's Side or the Opposition Side. It is a right that attaches to a Member, not to a Party, not to a Government, or Opposition. Therefore, I would like a clarification on the ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have referred to the rights which I would claim on the Member's behalf, from the Queen's Representative here, the Governor-General, acting as he then was when this Parliament opened. Yes, there is the right for a Member to stand in his or her place and when called on by His Honour the Speaker, to address the Chamber. It is also a right to stand on matters on Points of Order.

One of the rights I also claim is that of free speech. Sir, that will be truncated in very limited circumstances, in order to stop a Member essentially from having that right, you have, as I understand it, to come within the four corners of the Standing Orders. This is what has to be considered when a Member rises on a point of order.

As Presiding Officer, I have been entrusted with the role, as you know, of determining whether or not you have, in fact, risen on the point of order. Once I have determined that, as far as I am aware, that is the end of the matter, unless you wish to bring it up in another form. I have made my ruling and I so rule.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I am asking for your ruling on a point of privilege, which to put it simply, is the right of a Member to be able to address this Chamber and to complete the point of order without being asked to sit, or the point of order being ruled out of order, because I did not complete my sentence.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let me put a ruling on it. I thought it was clear that you have asked for a ruling, so let me give you a ruling.

There is no right of the Member to go on indefinitely on a point of order as far as this Chair is concerned. If that was so, it means that I would have to sit here and listen for 10 minutes, if you wish, while the Member continues on what the Member considers to be a point of order.

When I determine that I understand where you are going and you have not established the point of order, I have the right to bring it to an end, so that we can continue with the matter before this Chamber and I so rule.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. President, on a point of privilege. I want to clarify what I am speaking on. I am not speaking about the right of a Member to speak indefinitely. I am speaking of the right of a Member within two minutes to make a statement in relation to a point of order on the basis that an Honourable Member is misleading the House and to provide the evidence of how that Member is misleading the House.

Sir, I was curtailed in the middle of my sentence. I was not speaking for more than even a minute and I was curtailed on the basis that the Chair assumed that I would make the same point that my two predecessors made, in relation to the comment made by the Honourable Member.

Mr. SPEAKER: Which you did.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: No, Sir, because I was not finished and I challenged you, Sir, to be able to finish my thoughts or my speech and if that were the case, there would be no need for my being able to exercise my right as an individual Member in this Chamber.

I say to you, Sir, that you are free to rule the point of order out of order, but what you are not free to do, Sir, is to curtail my right as a Member of this Chamber to be able to make a point of order on the basis, as allowed by the

Standing Orders of this Chamber, that a Member is misleading the Chamber.

In fact, Sir, you are not required to wait until you have to give a speech. If not, the Standing Order would make no sense. This is why the Standing Order allows you to correct an untruth. The right to free speech is not an absolute right, but it is a right that is fettered by all of the points of the Standing Orders that require decency, truthfulness, accuracy of facts and that is the simple point.

I am asking you, Sir, not to bring this Chamber's record into disrepute.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you accusing this Chair of bringing this Chamber into disrepute.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I am asking you not to do it. I have not done it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue. Ignore the asides and continue.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, again, that is the doctrine of anticipatory breach. I am asking for it not to happen. Sir, I am not in here making a point lightly. The one sacred right of all Members of Parliament, who are found in a Parliamentary system, is the right to make a point of order. Sir, it is so fundamental, and if it were not fundamental, I would not be delaying the business of the House this morning, especially on the eve of the Christmas Season.

I am saying to you, Sir, that this is a fundamental right that affects how every Member in here would operate. I find it curious, and I would ask that the ruling I am asking for cannot be responded to something that I did not ask for. I did not ask for a Member speaking indefinitely. I asked for the right of a Member to make a point of order within two minutes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, where did you find the two minutes? Is that in our Standing Orders?

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the two minutes are not in our Standing Orders. The two minutes are indicative of what is reasonable. You spoke to what is unreasonable. I am speaking to the right of what is reasonable. I am saying that I am asking you, the Honourable Speaker of this Chamber to defend the rights of Members.

11.00 a.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: All I am asking you, Sir, the Honourable Speaker of this Chamber, is to defend

the rights of Honourable Members, as has been done by every previous Speaker in this Chamber. Sir, that right to be able to rise on a point of order is fundamental to the conduct of the rights of Honourable Members in this Chamber. I do not know how that could get contentious, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, as I said repeatedly - and this is the last time I will be addressing it, at least this morning - we know that you and other Honourable Members have the right to rise on a point of order, and that is why Honourable Members have been allowed to rise in their seats. I am entrusted with the right to determine whether or not you have actually risen on a point of order, because Honourable Members rise on matters which they consider to be points of order when the Chair considers them not to be.

I have said to you - I have ruled on it already - that I do not know of any Rule which says that you have to finish a sentence or anything of the sort. When I determine that there is no point of order, I will so rule and the Honourable Member, whether it is you Honourable Member or any other Honourable Member, would be asked to take his or her seat as I have been doing from the inception of this Session, and I so rule. I do not know how I can make that any clearer.

I also know that there are procedures in place for you to bring up matters such as these and for you to bring rulings of the Chair under scrutiny by this august Chamber. If you still feel that I have not addressed it, you should avail yourself of those procedures. I have so ruled and we will now proceed. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of privilege.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please indicate which particular privilege of the House is being eroded.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, you have indicated that you have a right to protect the rights of Honourable Members.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, I have.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: The issue here is a very small one. I, like the Honourable Member, have been in these Chambers for quite some time and I have had the opportunity of...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the asides are getting too loud. This is a very important matter.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: You are a wasted voice.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please ignore the asides if you can and let us discuss this matter. It is a very important matter. Honourable Member, please give this matter the attention it deserves.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, traditionally, whatever the feelings on Both Sides, it is usual for the Speaker to ensure that the rights of that Honourable Member is protected. This is a very simple matter. The Honourable Member has indicated that she has not finished her point of order. You have a right to rule that there is no point of order. If in the opinion of the Honourable Member, she has not finished the point, all you need to do is to simply let her continue, or let her start the point all over again and then in your judgement, you have that right.

I am just giving you advice as a matter of privilege. You have that right, but I do not think that it is fair to the Honourable Member to be interrupted before the point is made. It has never happened in these Chambers. You have to understand that when you leave these Chambers, people will judge you as Speaker in accordance with how you performed your role.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member. Thank you for the advice. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I am going to go straight back to my text because the Honourable Members on That Side are disturbed about things which have nothing to do with...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I hope you are not addressing the point on which you have just ended.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: No, Sir, I am talking about transport.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue with the order which is before this Honourable House. I thank you.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I am about to show you what I mean, Sir. Sir, in the headlines of the November 21 issue of the Nation Newspaper there was a photograph...

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South knows full well the Standing Orders. Sir, no Honourable Member is allowed under our Standing Orders to quote or to refer to articles in the newspapers in this Chamber and I will ask that the Honourable Member withdraw the statement and the referral to the newspaper.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I remember the headline of November 21.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I asked for a ruling, because the Honourable Member is referring to a newspaper publication, and according to the Standing Orders of this House, that is not allowed. I ask that the Honourable Member be asked to withdraw that referral.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church South, please continue.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: The event I am referring to was the crumbling of a road at Vault Road in St. Thomas. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas should spend some time telling this Chamber how she plans to assist the Ministry of Transport and Works in bringing that situation to a proper conclusion without...

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Christ Church South. Yes, Honourable Member.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am asking for your ruling about a referral to a publication in the newspaper. According to the Standing Orders of this House that is not allowed. I am asking for your ruling on the matter. I have not heard it yet. Could you please give a ruling?

Mr. SPEAKER: I find no point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member has made mention of a road in St. Thomas and when I intend to fix it. Mr. Speaker, I have never ever worked in the Ministry of Public Works as a Minister, as a general worker, as a bulldozer or anything, and I would challenge the Honourable Member for Christ Church South to step out of this Chamber and make the same comment and then I would deal with that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I would never refer to the Honourable Member as a bulldozer, I would never do that. The only point I am making is that for us to maintain an effective and efficient bus service, we have to have good roads too.

Sir, the Transport Board would always be grappling with enquiries about improvements in roads and the Director of the Transport Board would always be grappling with decisions on routes. If the Honourable Member knows of any road, not Vault Road, in or out of St. Thomas which needs urgent attention, she should be willing to bring it to our attention.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are being repetitive. Please proceed.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: She could even assist. The point must therefore be made that as we contemplate and continue the free school service for our primary, secondary and tertiary students, we need to make sure that the enquiries that are being made for improvements be heard in a proper and effective way by the Members of staff and by the Board of the Transport Board and then put in place. Mr. Speaker, we have the comments of our school principals and others. Sir, the Lodge School had no problem, because the Lodge School, in all fairness, was already served by a dedicated bus service, but we were still able to augment that with the public service being able to sit on top of that arrangement and provide even more. There was a request from the Principal of Alexander School for...

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to draw to your attention...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am sure that you would have been here last week when it was indicated that an Honourable Member must rise in his seat. Is that your seat?

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: You want me to move back to my seat? If that is your ruling, Sir, I accept it.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just go back to your place and let us hear the point of order.

Asides.

House A22 Sequence 7

11.10 a.m.

December 09, 2008

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, again I would like to rise on a point of order, as it is reflected on Page 34, Part 1 of the Rules of Debate. Sir, this states clearly: "A Member may not read his speech, but he may read extracts from books or papers, other than newspapers, in support of his argument, and may refresh his memory by reference to notes."

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member made reference to a newspaper publication and in my understanding, in the short time that I have been here - unlike the Honourable Leader of the Opposition - that has always been a breach of the Standing Orders. Sir, I would again ask that the words of the Honourable Member be struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, my understanding is that Honourable Members are not allowed to read their speeches, but may of course refer to notes. Honourable Members are allowed to quote from various documents, which can be identified specifically, or which can be made a document of this Honourable House. When it comes to newspapers, Honourable Members are not allowed to read from newspapers, but I am not sure there is any harm that it is forbidden that a Honourable Member could mention a particular newspaper.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South is using insulting language against an Honourable Member, and those words should be struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: Which words, Honourable Member?

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: The words the Honourable Member has just used, and it would be beneath me to repeat them.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South, I must say quite frankly that I was distracted at that point. I was having a look at the Order to which you referred and so I did not hear the words.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the point I was making was about the responses from the school, from Head Teachers, students and in some cases parents. The point that was made was about the success of the free travel school service and about the need to intensify it. Sir, as I said, not for one moment are we saying that we have been able to get rid of the question of deviance.

Sir, as has been made publicly, even currently, there are issues which constantly address the Board in respect to how we could deal with this deviant behaviour, how could we deal with this truancy which is not about the Board but about society in which we are living.

Sir, these are wide issues which we, as a government, would have to address and we would have to put such controls in place in our bus stands. We would also have to so tool our police officers, so that they could take responsible matured positions in dealing with these mostly young minds in our society.

Mr. Speaker, we are not unaware of the fact that there needs to be improvements and indeed at some time in the future, the Board would have to look at replacement of new equipment, which is inevitable, especially as we are clearly losing some level of charter business. Sir, the accounts of the Transport Board will demonstrate that we are losing some of our charter business, as we try to maintain our free school service, which is a stated priority. The time would come when we would move into a better situation with more stock and also to augment with PSVs, to make the overall transport service something of which we could all be proud.

Mr. Speaker, as another initiative, not untried, as we continue to experiment with the park-and-ride system, as this would have been tried by the Barbados Labour Party while in Government. One of their notable successes was Cricket World Cup, 2007, which was their only success, that park-and-ride situation travelling to and from Kensington Oval.

Mr. Speaker, we had an opportunity on the evening of the celebration of our Independence, when we instituted a park-and-ride system from a number of locations such as Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre and the Wilkey Complex, among others. Sir, all the comments about this service points to a tremendous experience.

This tells me that in going forward, as a Transport Board and as a serious Government, we need to accelerate the opportunity for people who live in outlying districts to make the choice of either using their vehicles into Bridgetown or better yet, to avail themselves of a park-and-ride service, starting at Oistins, the Gymnasium, NCF car park at Oxnards, among others, where, with little outlay of money, we could put these opportunities in place. This would be one of the immediate or short-term charges to the Directors of the Transport Board. This would have the tremendous benefit of relieving some of our traffic flow.

Mr. Speaker, as we complete the ABC Highway and get it ready for a free flow of service for Christmas, and then the ultimate completion as soon as we could in the new year, we want to be able to offer a smooth and quick

option to commuters of Barbados to select a park-and-ride service, probably in the lighter hours of the day, for example, 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. where they could park their vehicles and take transport into Bridgetown, do their business and return. This would be one of the priorities.

Mr. Speaker, you heard this Government last week rolled out a stimulus package for road repairs. Sir, without trying to incur the wrath of the Honourable Members on the Other Side - although I am quite prepared to deal with it - the facts are that Constituencies of St. Lucy and St. John were seriously neglected by the Barbados Labour Party, during the last 14 years, and we have adopted a deliberate policy of dealing with this situation.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, for the Honourable Member to indicate that the constituencies of St. Lucy and St. John have been neglected during the past 14 years, suggests that there were no other Constituencies that were neglected.

Sir, there have been other Constituencies that were neglected, both during the last 14 years and previously to 1994. Therefore, I would like to remind the Honourable Member that the Constituency of St. Andrew was neglected by the Democratic Labour Party for about 14 years previous to 1994.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is not a point of order. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, clearly the Honourable Member knows of more Constituencies that were neglected in the period to which I referred. Mr. Speaker, the important point is that we, as a Government, have decided that as part of our economic stimulus package, we will get ahead with these road works in St. Lucy, St. John, St. Peter, St. Andrew, and in other parishes which we have identified.

I will name a few of these areas for clarity so that no one leaves here misunderstanding the situation.

11.20 a.m.

We spoke of the St. Lucy's Church to Crab Hill road, for instance. This will enable a better transport service to occur. Sir, Sledge Pond, in St. Peter; St. Simon's in St. Andrew; Sherbourne NO. 2 and Sherbourne No. 3 in St. John, and Pot House in St. John. These are areas we will immediately be dealing with under the stimulus package as part, not only of the Road Rehabilitation Programme but in order to make sure that the engines of the economy do not grind to a halt, and that we can put discretionary spending in the hands of the workers of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in Haggatts to Belleplaine, Venture in St. John, Glenburnie, Cox Hill, Supers, Cliff Cottage, all these are areas in the country which, if they are put in good repair, will allow our transport services and, indeed, our commuters to move around the island more freely.

Sir, I may have to review the situation at Chalky Mount in St. Andrew, that is the intention. Sir, Chalky Mount to Coggins in St. Andrew, Colleton Gardens in St. John, Stewart Hill, Martin's Bay, Clifton Hall in St. John and Content to St. Lucy and Zoares in St. John, these are areas of total neglect.

Mr. Speaker, I want the public of Barbados and those listening to these debates in this Honourable Chamber, to understand the magnitude of the work we have undertaken on behalf of the people of Barbados. I want them to understand the seriousness with which we treat the question of transport in this country and the seriousness with which we treat, not only public transport by way of the Transport Board, but the ability of ordinary commuters to move around the country and ply their business. Sir, if we allow our road system to fall apart by extension, Sir, the transport system is of no avail. There will be no growth or there will be no economic activity so, Sir, it is absolutely important.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in here before, we shall revisit the programme of road resurfacing, which was highlighted by the last Administration, the \$235 million package, because we believe firmly in our hearts that along with this programme, must come a substantial and deliberate road repair programme that preserves these surface renewals for longer periods.

We are already finding that many of the surfaces that were done under these programmes have already been washed away by the advent of the heavy rains, which we have seen and in some cases, even before that. Sir, along with that, the drainage that is to be applied to the road surfaces must be put in place.

We, on This Side, are about to set up a complete new Ministry to deal with the question of drainage while, of course, at the same time, recognising the need for the Ministry of Transport and Works to liaise and work with this entity to make sure that the drainage of the road takes place.

Sir, if the road drainage is not complete and thorough, then the road becomes the drain. Sir, when the road becomes the drain, the surfaces are compromised and largely destroyed. Mr. Speaker, that is the difference in the approach we are going to be taking in this regard.

Sir, not only the Transport Board, but the road repair programme will see an opportunity being given to

Barbados to enjoy this country more, to reap the benefit of being a Barbadian and the benefit of moving around Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, let me speak to one of my pet projects. We have taken \$1 million extra in the stimulus package to make sure that signage is brought up-to-date in Barbados. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is looking befuddled, because he is not here very often and is probably hearing this for the first time.

Mr. Speaker, the practice, which we have found, where only three MTW depots have the mandate to do signage work, that will be changed. I have already directed the Ministry that I want to see all the depots with a team dedicated to signage and the renewal of signage.

I would think that a reasonable target would be to have 10 depots capable of renewing road markings and making sure the signage around the country is correctly and timely placed and replaced. Sir, the approach now, if a sign gets knocked over, is to hang our heads and cry: "Oh Lord, when will this end."

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that all those elements that would bring about a safer road environment for the commuters of Barbados are put in place a large measure as we can, because certainly, what we have inherited is not adequate. Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the staff because I have already noted a tremendous improvement in the application of sign marking and road markings throughout the country. Sir, I encourage them every day to make this one of their priorities because, without it, we are literally lost and we do not know where we are going.

Mr. Speaker, even where the roads are narrow, a little mark to demonstrate where the centre of the road is, will assist us in moving around safely and probably save on some of the accidents that occur daily throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, in the stimulus package, we are also implementing a programme of building roundabouts. We are not talking about it any more, because a lot of the roundabouts, which are about to be named, have been sitting on the Honourable Member for St. George North's desk for years. Sir, he did not have the courage nor persuasive power to make sure that the people of Barbados were readily served, so Sir, the Boarded Hall roundabout will be done.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member opens his arms but I want to point out that this Boarded Hall roundabout has sat around for at least five years. The roundabout at Coral Ridge is earmarked to be part of this stimulus package. Sir, opposite Boarded Hall at the

Turnpike, that roundabout at Carmichael will be part of the stimulus package. Sir, these things are important.

Mr. Speaker, as we unfold the solutions to our road network problems, we will be demonstrating a decision, which is informed not only by the position of the technocrats in the Ministry itself, but by the people of Barbados, who we ultimately serve.

Mr. Speaker, in getting back to the substantive Bill of the day, I want to again congratulate the Transport Board, its directors and its staff for a job well done so far. I hope that, as a government, we can continue to make the resources available to them, so that they can continue to serve this country and the children of this country especially, so well. I hope by this small introduction of two new Members to the Board, where we widen the wealth of decision-making, I hope by this small addition that we can in some way even meet more of the demands and needs of the Constituencies of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words and the many interruptions on the Other Side, I commend this Bill to the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

11.30 a.m.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I thought you were asking if someone wanted to second the Bill. I see no one on the Government's Side seconding this Bill.

Sir, I rise to lead the debate on the Opposition Side. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South, spent an hour-and-a-half with much ado about nothing. This Bill just seeks to change Section 5 of the Act from 7 Members to 9 Members, where the Democratic Labour Party feels that it is a fundamental change. This Act was in place for over 50 years and no previous Government has sought to increase the Board Members.

This Government is trying to appoint two of their operatives from out of the bosom of the Democratic Labour Party to serve this Board. There is no fundamental change. It is only window dressing. Sir, of course, it is Christmas time and Government seeks to put up curtains, or seeks to exercise their right to put up candles and Christmas lights here and there. Sir, this is what the Government is seeking to do. There is no fundamental change in this exercise. It is the same thing they did when they brought the Hospital Bill to increase the number of Board Members.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party, after almost one year in office, has done absolutely nothing. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South has on his desk a number of things and after 11 months, this is the only thing the Minister ...

Hon. K.St.C. BEST: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by indicating that the Democratic Labour Party has done nothing within the last year. There are a number of ongoing projects that were started by the Barbados Labour Party. To say that the Democratic Labour Party has done nothing is grossly misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member seems to be the pit bull of the Democratic Labour Party.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I called him Honourable Member. He asked that he be called the Honourable Member, Pit Bull of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, withdraw the statement and let us move on.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, I want to withdraw the words "Pit Bull". He is the anchor man of the Back Bench. I believe he would appreciate that and seems to be happy with those words.

Sir, I am of the view that this is much ado about nothing. We were hoping that this Bill could have been debated in 2 or 3 minutes, but since the Minister went on so wide, and spoke at length about work that he started and what we have not done in St. John and St. Lucy, and what he has on his plate to do, he spoke about drainage even though the Honourable Prime Minister has withdrawn that Head from him, and he wants now to work with another Minister, when he had the opportunity to do a number of things in drainage.

Sir, I want to look at some of the things that the Honourable Member said about the Transport Board and also, to correct a number of misconceptions about the Transport Board in my address today.

Sir, when the Honourable Member spoke about 123 per cent ridership between September and October, 2008, in the Transport Board system, he said it was a 123 per cent increase over last year. I was not sure if he meant over a two-year period or over a period between the end of September and October. He said that there was a 123 per cent increase of ridership in September. I hope that the

revenue of the Transport Board, when it reaches this Parliament, will reflect that increase.

The Honourable Member also said the percentage levelled off at 24 per cent. He said that is apparently the acceptable percentage increase they are looking at. We would expect to see that the subvention to the Transport Board will also reflect the percentage of increase when it comes to this Parliament.

Sir, this Party supports the free bus service for school children. In fact, it must be clearly said here that for 14 years the Barbados Labour Party Government never sought to increase bus fares in this country, because we believed that a good transport system was fundamental to the sound economic affairs of this country. That is what we fundamentally believed.

Sir, we inherited a situation in 1994 where the then Democratic Labour Party Government was contemplating increasing bus fares to \$2.50 for each rider, including school children. Sir, for 14 years bus fares were kept at \$1.50.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. As I recall over the last 14, the only person...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what is your point of order?

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: In what way?

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: As I recall, over the last 14 years, the only person who spoke about increasing bus fares was a former Honourable Member for St. Philip South of the Barbados Labour Party, a former Member of Cabinet.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. George North, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about any Honourable Member of this House. I am speaking of the Democratic Labour Party committing themselves to the International Monetary Fund to increase bus fares in this country. That is a fact of life, and it is documented. I am talking about the period between 1993 and 1994 when the Government was changed. Sir, we recognised the necessity to have a bus service that maintained the \$1.50 and children paid \$1.

Sir, when the Democratic Labour Party came to office 10 months ago, they found new buses and a daily fleet of over 200 buses on the road, rolling stock. This was

not the same case when we came to office in 1994. We could not introduce any free bus service then. However, the Democratic Labour Party was in a position where they were able to introduce and to carry on a pilot programme which we started in the North, that is why the Minister could say in this Honourable House today, that the Lodge School had a dedicated bus service, which was started by the Barbados Labour Party Government.

In the North, we had a dedicated school bus service, a pilot programme was started. I hope that when the Honourable Minister of Education gets up to speak, he would tell this Honourable House the truth. We had a pilot programme in the North with the intention to have a service incooperating the private sector with the public sector.

Sir, this Government decided that they wanted a State monopoly. Therefore, they introduced a free bus service without contemplating the help of the private sector.

11.40 a.m.

Sir, they have actually sought to wipe out the private sector investment in this country. Sir, that was the intention and that is what they sought to do.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber trying to indicate that we have done any such thing in an attempt to wipe out the private sector. As a matter of fact, I was at pains during my presentation to indicate how we eased the burden of the cost of fuel on the private sector vehicles.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, the Honourable Member is entitled to his opinion. If it is his opinion, that is what the measures will do. It is his right to state this in this Chamber. It is freedom of speech.

Asides.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member spoke for one hour and 15 minutes and has said nothing. As far as I am concerned, he made one point. I am of the view, Mr. Speaker, that the measures the Government introduced in September, were not properly thought out. That is the first thing, even though it appeared that the intention was good.

Sir, their intention was to introduce a free...

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: It is not in your manifesto. We never saw it. It was never there. You just came and said that you want to introduce a measure, because you found that you had buses.

Mr. Speaker, after 14 years, we were able to provide more than 15 new buses every year in this country, so that the Transport Board was properly equipped to handle part of the load that the Government has put on them.

Mr. Speaker, on the other hand, what they have done, they have not only damaged the revenue of the Transport Board, because they had to take off the buses from doing the commercial arm of the Board, that is the charter work. The Minister recognised that they had to do this and the Government had to find the revenue to prop up the Transport Board for this action.

I am saying that when the Government introduced the free bus service in this country, it was not properly thought out. Even though, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Education said that the Principals of all the secondary schools came to the public and said that it is the best thing. One Principal said that it is the best thing they ever had since sliced bread.

I wonder what is happening today, because the Minister said that it has now been reduced to 123 per cent. Sir, you think if I was at school and I got 123 per cent increase, which is a good thing, but a month after, I only could achieve 24 per cent, I would say that it is not a good thing after all.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please do not shout across the Chamber like that. You need to allow the Member to make his speech.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am aware since October of this year, many of the private sector vehicles are now carrying the same numbers as the Transport Board. The minibuses are now carrying a lot of passengers and people are continuing to pay for their children because many children are now getting to school after 10:00 o'clock. I want the Minister to refute that, Sir.

I am saying to this House that many children going to the North of this island are now getting to school at 10:00 o'clock. Many children are now seen in the bus terminals after 9:00 o'clock. I have carried out my own research and I have seen children in the bus terminal way after 9.30 a.m. I can sit if the Minister of Education would want to refute that, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying to the House that even though it is a good system, the public sector must be involved, because the Transport Board does not have the fleet to carry the full school enrollment. The Barbados Labour Party Government said a year ago, through the then Minister of Education, who went to the public and said that he wanted to involve the private sector. I am saying that if this Government wants to introduce a free bus service, we have no problem with this, but we need to bring in the private sector as well, the minibuses and the ZRs.

Mr. Speaker, to say that all the minibuses and all the ZRs are bad, is unfair. I am saying there are some routes where the Transport Board cannot service, such as Grazettes and Bush Hall in St. Michael, and the Minister's Constituency, Route 11. I made the point early in this House that in Route 11 which services the Constituency of the Minister of Transport and Works, the Transport Board cannot adequately service and he is aware of this. Sir, on route 11 where there are more than 80 minibus persons and ZRs, they carry the bulk of the school children.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if the school children do not get into the minibuses and ZRs, they will not get to school some days. Sir, some parents and the private sector are now finding a reversal of the Government's policy, where the parents are now encouraging their children to go on the Transport Board buses, but also to catch the minibuses and ZRs, if the bus does not turn up.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that one has to look carefully at implementing a good policy, because you could implement a good policy in the wrong way. There are many cases, Mr. Speaker, where my constituents of St. George have complained that the buses passed them and sometimes they have to wait at the bus stop for two and three hours. Sir, people have complained in Charles Row Bridge, the Glebe and Newbury that if they did not have the services of the minibuses that they would not get to work on time. Therefore, I am saying that the Government must sit with the private sector and implement a good programme.

Sir, if you look at St. Philip, Sam Lord's Castle; Sargeant Street, St. John, and Blades Hill, these routes are serviced mainly by the private sector. They do a better job than the Transport Board, not that the Transport Board cannot do the service, but they do not have the fleet. Therefore, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South quoted from the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto, when we said that we will supply the Transport Board with 50 new buses per year. He made a lot of laughing sport at that.

The Barbados Labour Party was bold enough to say in our Manifesto that the Barbados Labour Party will provide 50 new buses per year. I want to find out if the

Government is still honouring that commitment, because the Transport Board said in their programme about two years ago, that in order for them to satisfy the public, they would need at least 350 additional buses.

Therefore, we recognised, as a Government that if you had 200 new buses, for the next five years, you had to provide at least 50 new buses every year, in order to keep the Transport Board afloat. Sir, this is what we were doing.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party Government came to power and tried to refurbish a number of old buses. I want to find out what is really the cost?

11.50 a.m.

I want to know what is the cost because the Minister has not said what is the cost of refurbishing a number of those old buses. Is it \$500 000? Mr. Speaker, from my investigation, it has cost the Government over \$25 million to refurbish a number of those old buses that are now out of service again.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by trying to indicate that \$25 million was spent on repairing the 70 or 80 buses that were added to the fleet.

Mr. SPEAKER: How much?

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I stated in my presentation that slightly less than \$500 000 was spent in refurbishing the fleet of buses to get us ready for the school bus service. The Honourable Member is trying to be dramatic by putting untrue statements on the air, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, he did say that it was his investigations. I am of the view that you cannot stop him from saying what his investigations revealed. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I am not only talking about the school bus service. The Minister must tell this House what is the cost of refurbishing those 50 to 60 buses. I am saying that it was not \$500 000. My investigations revealed that it has cost the Government almost \$25 million to put those buses on the road, and the buses are now off the road again. If this House is doubtful of what I am saying, Honourable Members, could go up there any night or any day and see how many buses are now parked all over the place at the Transport Board. If you go up there now, they are off the road.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: It is midday and all the buses should be out on the streets. Mr. Speaker, the Transport

Board has been doing a good service and the Democratic Labour Party must not come in here to say that they have done a wonderful job. The Transport Board was a national Transport Board from 1955 under the Barbados Labour Party. The Barbados Labour Party made the Transport Board a national bus service and continues to subsidise the Transport Board, so that is nothing new. Therefore, when the Minister comes in here with all the widow dressing to increase the numbers from seven to nine and making it a big thing as though this is a big thing... All the Honourable Member wants to tell the public is that he wants to put in two of his operatives who...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have five minutes in which to conclude.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sorry, it slipped me, I am very sorry. I am very sorry for breaking your stride. Continue please. We make these mistakes from time to time.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am of the view that the Government must tell this House more than this. The Government must tell this House what is the policy of Government when it comes to transport, because nobody in this country knows what is the policy of the Government. The policy of the Government rests on freeness. That has been the Democratic Labour Party's fundamental policy from day one. Their fundamental policy is what can I do to give freeness to somebody?

The Democratic Labour Party does not test the mind of any Barbadian. The Democratic Labour Party does not challenge anybody. They have not looked at bus rationalisation in this country. I want to hear about that. How do I rationalise the routes in Barbados? How do I get the Transport Board into not only the lucrative routes but servicing the public? They must talk about security on the buses.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware, and all Honourable Members are aware - the Minister must not hide behind the blind, that Transport Board drivers are very unsecured when they are travelling out into the fields at night. The Transport Board drivers need help. Mr. Speaker, we were thinking about a security system. I want to hear where it is on the Minister's desk. Has he implemented it? The Transport Board has been crying out for a camera system to be placed in each bus, where is it? We were about to implement it at the time.

Is the Transport Board more accountable to the public? Mr. Speaker, I am aware that there are seven Members at the Transport Board now and they are not accountable to anybody but themselves and some of them are trying to run the bus service on a daily basis. I want to

hear from the Minister what is the role of the new Chairman of the Transport Board. Is his job to take over the running of the Transport Board and to frustrate all the management staff at the Transport Board?

Mr. Speaker, it was one of their candidates in the last Election who said to get rid of the General Manager at the Transport Board.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: He sought not only to get rid of the General Manager of the Transport Board but to get rid of the Police too. It is the job of the Democratic Labour Party to frustrate all managers of Statutory Boards. Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing I regret, it is that this Government did not put in place security of tenure for Statutory Boards.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party is abusing the Statutory Boards. It is the Government's views that all senior managers of statutory boards be sent home. I have heard the Honourable Prime Minister say that you should give each Chief Executive Officer 90 days to pack up and leave. This is unfortunate in our system.

Mr. Speaker, when we came to office, we made the point that job No. 1 was to find employment for all persons and we kept on persons that we found in office. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that it is unfair in our system to change and to frustrate all Statutory Boards. You have to work with them.

I was at the National Housing Corporation and I found the General Manager and I suspected that he was on the Other Side but I never touched him, I worked with him. The present Government is trying to frustrate every Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. Speaker, this exercise here about putting two operatives on the Board is merely to frustrate the Transport Board. What is the quorum? I do not know. I want to hear the names. Mr. Speaker, the amendment here today did not say who the two Members would be, if they would be from the engineering fraternity, if they would be doctors or lawyers.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Expertise in what? The only expertise they have to have is a Democratic Labour Party Membership card.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. During my presentation I made it clear what the skill set was that we were looking for. We are looking for persons out there with

an intimate knowledge of how the Transport Board operates, experience and commuter-ship. Those were the exact words I used. I wish the Honourable Member would listen.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Member should do now is to move an amendment today to say that the two Members should be Members of the engineering fraternity, or a specific skill sect.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, what I am saying to you is that it is the Government's intention to run each Statutory Board from George Street. Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point that you must allow those persons who have good intentions to run the Board, because I believe that some of them are experts in their own field.

Mr. Speaker, I know for sure that at the Transport Board - I want to speak on this because you are going to hear of situations... I believe that the unions must be more vigilant at this time, I know they are not.

12:00 noon

Mr. Speaker, I call on the Barbados Workers' Union to be more vigilant, especially at the Transport Board. Sir, I am aware there are persons in the Human Resource Department, who call around when people are on sick leave, asking those persons if they are, indeed sick. Sir, this is a bad thing, and the Minister must be aware of these things. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that no Chairman nor Board Member has any right to call a worker and ask that worker if he or she is sick.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Members of a Board must meet and set broad policies, and there is nobody at the Transport Board who could say, when I was Minister, that I have ever intervened in the day-to-day running of the Board. As Minister, we would meet from time to time and discuss broad policies.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the view - and this is serious - that there are many Chairmen of Boards who are doing this. We are seeing situations where Chairmen of Boards are intervening in the day-to-day running of operations. We are seeing it happening at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, for instance.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I do not know about the National Conservation Commission, but I know about the Rural Development Commission, and so I hope that the new Minister would look at both entities.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please permit the Honourable Member for St. George North to make his contribution in silence.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the new Minister of the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission must look carefully at what is happening at those entities. I am aware that a number of persons from the Board are, on a daily basis, instructing management to give relief to persons whom they support. Sir, I am saying this is bad. This is not good in a small economy such as ours.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the situation at the Transport Board, the Minister needs to tell us where we are in relation to a pension plan for the workers of the Board. Sir, for years the Transport Board was looking at that. We had carried out a survey and a programme was put in place, to help those workers at the Transport Board to have a good pension plan when they retire.

Mr. Speaker, the transport system is still in need of the overhaul that was planned. I reMember during the last Election, the Government made a big hullabaloo about the transport system. In relation to the ABC Highway, they said they were going to revamp the flyovers. They also said there was going to be a new transport system, but today, there is still gridlock on our roads. Sir, for example, on Highway 5, one could spend as much as one hour coming from Gertz Supermarket into Bridgetown on mornings.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister came to this Honourable House six months ago and said he was going to introduce a one-way system, that is turning streets one way during the morning period and reversing them in the evening. The Minister said that as far as he was concerned, six months down the road, there would be no gridlock on our roads, that his Government had a plan in place. Sir, today it is worse on our highways.

Mr. Speaker, we have also found that the Democratic Labour Party was never in favour of building the ABC Highway, and what do we find? Sir, on the ABC Highway is worse than it was 10 years ago, even though we now have a four-lane highway, because many a day traffic is reduced to one lane, because this system of digging up continues after 10 months. Sir, they cannot get it right. That highway was to have been completed by May this year.

Mr. Speaker, they continue to dig up the highway, and if you look at the highway today, you would see that it is such a shameful act. Sir, I do not like to pass the highway, because I cannot believe that after spending so many years looking at introducing a four-lane highway in Barbados, as a model for Barbados, based on what was happening in Trinidad and Tobago and in Jamaica, to make this country the mecca of the Caribbean, we see a government coming in and destroying all of what we had planned to do.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the highway today, you would see that it is pure madness. Sir, there is no maintenance programme, the trees are growing from one side of the road to the next, people are dumping everything on the highway. I passed there yesterday, reluctantly, and saw a tractor trying to clean the sides of the road. There were all types of garbage. I saw the driver trying to navigate between an old fridge and two boxes of something. This is what is happening, because there is no maintenance programme.

Sir, the Minister needs to tell this Honourable House what maintenance programme has he provided for a new highway that is costing taxpayers over \$120 million. Sir, I am saying the Minister has a right to maintain that highway, whether or not he is in agreement with it. It is the people's money.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister said today that I sat down for 14 years and have not done anything about the roundabouts. Sir, that is not true. Two years ago we brought proposals to Cabinet to improve 10 roundabouts in Barbados. Sir, at that time we recognised that we needed to introduce a system involving the private sector. At the time we hired a number of engineering companies to design and to implement a number of roundabouts. Sir, this was approved by Cabinet.

Sir, a Cabinet Paper of the day would say that a number of engineering companies were involved in the design of the Boarded Hall Roundabout, Windsor Roundabout, Carmichael Roundabout, Prior Park Roundabout. Sir, a number of private sector entities designed those roundabouts, and so the system is there.

Mr. Speaker, the Government paid for those services because we were involving the private sector. Sir, I made the point then to the then Government that in order to push the capital works programme of this country, we had to involve the private sector. Therefore, it was this Government that had the initiative to involve private sector financing.

We brought in, not only Rayside and Company, but COW Williams Construction. We bought two \$35 million packages. We had a road package to fix most of the roads

in St. Philip. We had a \$35 million package to fix most of the roads across Barbados. Sir, we had \$70 million in road works for a two to three-year programme. We implemented that programme, which is what this Government continues to do.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this highway project that is going on was not started by this Government, but they are continuing this programme, with adjustments, I noticed. They have not completed all the roads in St. George North, St. Thomas, nor St. John.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member was saying that we have not done anything in St. John, but the truth is, let me call the roads that have been done in St. John during the last 14 years. Sir, the road stretching from the Lodge School to St. John's Parish Church was completed. Work was done on the road stretching from Thicketts, St. Philip, to Sealy Hall, St. John. Sir, I want the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to get up and say that Thicketts, St. Philip was not done in our time.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Thicketts, St. Philip is in the Constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, as well as the Honourable Member for St. John.

12.10 p.m.

Sir, if there is one place I know, it is St. John. Sir, when Elections were called this year, we started Bath Road. We started to do the entire Bath Road, from Bath beach up to Bath Hill. Sir, a new bridge was built at New Castle, from Groves to St. John's Parish Church. Mr. Speaker, we spent over \$10 million in St. John.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber to give the impression that they did Bath Road. Sir, they made plans. I was on Bath Road this Saturday and to this day, only about one-third of the road in Bath is complete and, Sir, this was done in the last 10 months. The Honourable Member is giving the wrong impression and deliberately so too.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is trying to mislead this House, but the fact must be told that Bath Road was started in July, 2007, and we had financing for it. Sir, we recognised that Bath Road would cause the Government \$1.5 million because substantial work had to be done. I am saying that when the Elections were called, that a lot of the excavation was completed. We spent a lot of money on Bath. I am also

saying that Newcastle Bridge was completed and to give the House and the public the impression that nothing was done in St. John is not true.

Mr. Speaker, I told the Honourable Member for St. John long ago that if there were two Constituencies I recognised wanted help, it was St. John and St. George, along with St. Philip and, Sir, a lot of work was done in St. John. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the programme, work was also done in your Constituency by the Barbados Labour Party Government under the programme. I am not sure that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South is continuing the programme in Bush Hall and Bank Hall because work was supposed to be done there.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I ask what is happening to Headley's Land, Phase 2. Sir, I know you cannot speak, but I know that a programme was left for Headley's Land, Phase 2 and funds were left for it under a works programme left by the Barbados Labour Party. I want to ask the Honourable Member for Christ Church South where it is, because he must roll it out.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at St. Lucy, Shermans to Six Men's and at Crab Hill, a new police station was supposed to be built, so work was done all over Barbados. Sir, I recognise that this is one country and we have to fix the roads. I now see roads being done in St. Philip. The Government is continuing a programme that was started by us and this is a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, I made the point on the last occasion and the Prime Minister got up and refuted what I said. The Government has scaled-down the capital works programme of this country. The Prime Minister objected but, by now, the roundabouts should have been started because funds were left for them.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The capital works programme, if anything, it has been scaled-up.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I want to substantiate my point to show that Government has really scaled-down its capital works programme and, Sir, it is a bad thing for this country.

Mr. Speaker, on the last occasion, I made a point that the capital works programme will help to create employment. It will help to generate employment for the private sector as well as the public sector. The Government must unleash its capital programme in a meaningful way, if they are supposed to keep this country afloat. Sir, when you talk about scaling-down growth...

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Estimates of Expenditure for this year, I have checked it, the Government has not started Groves Roundabout. Sir, Groves Roundabout is in this year's Estimates. Sir, money was voted for it, but it has not been started as yet. When will the Government start it? Sir, \$1 million was earmarked for the roundabout at Groves. Sir, the roundabout at Carmichael has not been started yet. Prior Park junction has not been started yet and money is in this year's Estimates for it. Sir, Government has scaled-down the capital works programme.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about Headley's Land, Phase 2, because the Government has scaled-down on that as well. I want to hear the Minister, when he gets up to tell me what is happening to the roundabouts at Carmichael, Boarded Hall and Groves Corner, because monies have been voted for them.

Sir, if Government is serious about creating employment in this country, it has to put more money in its capital works programme because the Government has to keep employment up in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that Government must not rely on a programme, which I started two years ago to make the public believe it is theirs. I started two \$35 million programmes in this country and Government must put more than \$100 million in their capital works programme for the next financial year.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please do not engage in across the Floor conversation. Please direct your comments to the Chair. Let us proceed.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that Government must initiate a new package of the private sector and itself, because the Government cannot do all. Sir, \$17 million was introduced two years ago and we need not only \$17 million injected, like what has been done in Trinidad and in Jamaica, but the Government must put more money to road building. We did it two years ago. We started it and the Government must continue their road programme and their capital works' programme to enhance employment generation in this country.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of money needs to be spent in drainage, which we know. Sir, a lot of money needs to be spent in the infrastructural development of roads across this country. Sir, new buses must be bought and the security of the drivers is a must. Sir, we were also planning to enhance the bus terminal. Sir, look at the bus terminal. To date, the Government has done absolutely "nutten".

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I said “nutten” and the public understands me. Sir, it hurts me because a new bus terminal was to be built at Cheapside for the private sector and for the ZRs. Sir, plans were approved, but where are they?

Mr. Speaker, funds were left for a new bus terminal at Cheapside. Sir, I am not talking about Queen’s College because that was supposed to be completed. Sir, I am talking about Cheapside, because that was to be completed and lighted.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please keep it down.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, \$0.5 million was left in the Vote between 2007 and 2008. Sir, check the Estimates and you will find that \$0.5 million was provided for a new bus terminal at Cheapside. Sir, the bus terminal at River Road is in need of serious repair as well and a study was being carried out.

12.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at what is happening at the River Bus Terminal through to the Queen’s Park Gate, we were refurbishing the Bus Terminal. A new sidewalk would have been provided. We did a lot of work there.

Sir, if you pass the Constitution River today, it is pure madness. The Minister has not kept the promise. Debushing is to be done between the River Terminal and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. If you look at it today, serious drainage has not been continued. We drained the river from Queen’s Park Gate down to the Bus Terminal.

I want to hear from the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, when he gets up, if he is happy with what is happening up there? Sir, trees are now growing there. You are soon going to see monkeys up there. I am saying that the river is in need of serious debushing.

I do not know who is the Minister responsible for drainage now, because they have taken it away from my friend, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, the Minister of Public Works. I think he was trying, but it has been taken from him.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, they have given it to a Minister who has no tools. The Minister of Drainage had to rely on you for tractors and so on. Maybe that is the reason why the Honourable Member for Christ Church South decided that he is not going to lend the new Minister any tractors. If he is the Minister of Drainage, he has to find his own tractors.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: You have to cooperate with the new Minister. I am saying that the Government cannot ...

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, the learned Honourable Attorney-General must be aware that somebody is going to sue the Government. Somebody will sue the Government because you have nurses who must travel from the Hospital on foot every night to catch the bus down there. We need to debush that area. It is serious. We need to do it. I would like the Government to do the debushing before the Christmas season.

Sir, if there is one thing, as a government, we were always mindful that seasons like Independence - The Government claims that they are the champions of Independence. I did not want to say anything about this. Independence came and has gone, but the highway and all across Barbados is still full of bush. That is the problem. If the Government is the champion of these things, may be they must be mindful of the fact that they have to keep the highways and these things free of bush. The Minister must go to work and do the work he is being paid to do.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: As a former Minister, I used to go to work and do a good job, because we were paid well. The Ministers today will reap a big salary increase.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Mr. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. Only three days ago the Honourable Member for St. George North made the point that he is a contractor and he has been a contractor for many years. He was not a Minister. He has been a contractor.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I was a contractor for many years because I was the Minister of Housing, the chief contractor, and Minister of Public Works, the chief contractor.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I was always a contractor.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member also had a number of hundred dollar bills on his hand.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I always have those on my hand, unlike the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Sir, I am saying that we have to put a system in place for important seasons, like Christmas and Independence. I always told the Ministry of Public Works that they must debush and clean around all churches, community centres and across Barbados. This is not really happening. That is why I said two sessions ago, that it seems to me Government has scaled down its Capital Works Programme. The Minister of Public Works is the person who is responsible, more than any other Minister, for implementing a sound capital works programme.

Sir, it is unfortunate, but if you check the expenditure of the last Government, you will see that every year, at this time, the Government would come with a Supplementary to give the Ministry of Public Works more money to carry out its programme. This is the first year that we do not have a Supplementary for the Ministry of Public Works to carry out its programme. Is the Minister not ...

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: He is not spending the money that has been given to him. The Minister is not spending the money that has been given to him in a timely manner. That is why you are going to find at the end of this financial

GS -- 6 year, the Minister and the Ministry of Public Works will have more money than at any other time, and they are going to send it back to the Treasury, because they are not planning properly. They have to use the Vote. At this time all of the work should have been started in the Ministry of Public Works, the drainage and the bridge at Airy Hill should have been started by now. Also, work at Lion's Castle. Sir, money has been voted, but nothing has started. Cane Garden has not started. I am saying that the Government's programme must continue.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South spoke about 'park and ride', something we have left and I hope he will continue with that programme as well.

I also want to see the Minister take a serious look at a timely bus service. We know that in a small developing society like Barbados, it would be hard to implement, but the Minister must ensure that buses leave their destination on time. That is something we started. A new scheduling package was put in place by the Transport Board, a package based on modern technology to improve the bus service of the Transport Board. We hope that the Government would spend time now that there are two more Board members, to implement new strategies to ensure

buses leave and arrive on time. I know that it would not be totally possible, but at least within a 15-minute period.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: We started it and buses rolled out every half hour, the hour, or 15 minutes, as the case may be.

Sir, I want to hear about the transfer system. That was part of the programme left for the Minister to implement. A lot has been left for the new Minister.

Sir, I see there is an amendment coming on the Road Traffic Act, so I am not going to speak on that. I will have a lot to say on the Road Traffic Regulations. It has taken the Minister over a year to bring the Road Traffic Regulations which were left there. Nothing has been heard about it.

Sir, I wonder if the Minister is in collaboration with the Honourable Attorney-General's Office that is responsible for bringing these regulations here? The truth is, and I have said over and over, the Road Traffic Regulations have been drafted and all the Honourable Member has to do is work with the Police Department for implementation. There is a serious set of regulations. If there is need for an amendment, do so.

Sir, I listen to the police programme on mornings where they say that persons must travel with their drivers' licences, insurance and so on. All of that is in the Regulation. Until the Regulation is passed, I do not think the Police Department can be taken seriously.

12.30 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: They were drafted.

Sir, we could not implement everything, but serious work was done, and this Parliament can testify that serious work was done in the last year, on the Road Traffic Act. Today, the Ministry of Public Works has been reduced to a Works Ministry. Therefore, when the Minister brings a window dressing today, he is not really challenging the mind, because to change from two to seven, is not a challenge.

I am saying that there is no fundamental change, and the Minister must tell us how he is going to move traffic on Highway 5 and Highway 6. I am talking about specifically the traffic from Gertz Supermarket, right down Collymore Rock to Bridgetown.

Sir, a lot has been said about these things in the last Parliament and a lot has been left. We discussed such things as road widening and road calming measures. We started to implement a bus lay-by system on Highway 5 and Highway 6, to move traffic faster.

This morning I travelled from Gertz Supermarket to Pine Road and it is pure deadlock in those areas. I want to hear the Minister, because he said he is going to bring about change in this country. They said they wanted change. Where is the change? Sir, after 11 months, there is no change, only change for the worse.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say finally that the Minister talked about road signage. I want to really talk about road signage, because everybody in Barbados knows that it was this Minister a couple years ago, who introduced the National Road Signage Programme, with the Ministry of Tourism. Sir, we spent money on all those big beautiful green signs, so do not let the Democratic Labour Party Government come and tell you today that they are rolling out a new signage programme.

Mr. Speaker, a new signage programme was started two years ago, by the Barbados Labour Party, in conjunction with the World Cup Programme, and across Barbados, there are directional signage and locational signage, which read: "1 mile into Bridgetown, "1 mile into Speightstown." Again, do not let the Government come and say that they are introducing a new signage programme, because that was introduced two years ago. We had private sector funding for it, and most of the signs were built in Trinidad.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: What are you saying? You are introducing a new signage programme that was introduced already, so you are re-introducing something that was introduced already. I am saying to the Government that I want to see something new. The Government has to bring something new to this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken at length and This Side supports the increase, if the Government wishes to increase the numbers, because we do not want to get into the way, but we think that it is only a window dressing exercise.

I am obliged, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m. today.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

12.34 p.m.

RESUMPTION

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

His Honour K. St.C BEST: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the amendment to this Act. I think it is critical, based on what was outlined by the Minister when he clearly indicated that one of the primary reasons for the increase in numbers, was to have more skills available and expertise in the fields conducive to the transport system for the effective working of the Transport Board and the transport system in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, one needs to really look at what is happening, or what was happening before. In order to have any effective solution to the problem you have to be aware of what existed before. Under the former Administration, the maintenance programme in respect of the Transport Board was really a crying shame. Months ago, when you pass by Weymouth, you would have seen many buses parked during the day and as a result, many commuters throughout Barbados were suffering for transportation.

1.50 p.m.:

Mr. Speaker, one also has to look at the size of the buses in relation to the width of the roads in Barbados. Sir, when one looks at the size of the buses, one would see that because of the size of the Transport Board buses and the narrowness of the roads, those buses have to traverse daily, that too many accidents are occurring on our roads.

Sir, Government must be commended for taking the bold step for implementing free transportation to all school children in uniform. Sir, in order to achieve that one must commend the L & M Workshop at Cane Garden, as well as UCAL for answering the call to ensure that a fleet was available to transport our children throughout Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see where the Minister and Government could look at increasing the number of routes throughout the country, to ensure that we have an effective transportation system in Barbados.

Sir, since the introduction of free bus service among school children, I am sure that if one looks at the productivity level, one would see that it has increased because of the fact that parents travelling on those very buses, now take along their children with them. Parents are

now arriving at work on time and their children are also arriving at school on time. This also allows both parent and children to spend more family time together. Sir, parents feel more comfortable in that regard, because their children would be safer.

Mr. Speaker, one cannot look at the Transport Board in isolation. One has to look at the road network and at a proper road maintenance programme, as they complement each other. It means that the maintenance programme and the amount of money spent on maintenance would be greatly reduced, because if you have a proper road to travel on, then clearly maintenance in respect of those vehicles would be lower.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the record of the Barbados Labour Party, where the Honourable Member for St. George North indicated that under their tenure there was a good transport system, one wonders what is the true meaning of a good transport system with respect to the Barbados Labour Party? Are they saying it is a good system in the context of the many buses that were parked, only for minor repairs? Are they saying it is a good system in the context of what presently exists at the terminal at the Constitution River? Sir, as the former Minister would say, they had the idea or that it was their plan. Therefore, he could now be labelled as the Minister of Plan or as the Minister of Plan to implement.

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, it was amazing for the Honourable Member to say that he was the chief contractor. Surely he was the chief contractor of failure in the transport system. Sir, I am sure this Administration is doing all within its powers to complement the transport system and to have the private sector embodied and become part and parcel of the transport system of Barbados. The only way this could be done would be with dialogue and therefore, this Government has been in dialogue with the private sector operators.

Mr. Speaker, people would want to thump their chests and try to indicate that by allowing children to ride freely on the buses, has greatly reduced the income or that it has run the private sector operators almost to a halt. Sir, that is not so. Mr. Speaker, I think what it has caused the private sector operators to do, is to have a proper look at their system of management. Further, because of what has transpired during the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, you could now see a more effective management system, with respect to both private sector and public sector transport in this country.

Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that the Barbados Labour Party has put out a Manifesto: "Barbados, Better Than

Ever." "The Barbados Labour Party 2007 Report on Promises and Performance." Sir, when one checks this Manifesto, there is nothing in this Manifesto that relates to the performance of the transport sector in this country.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member would check pages 22 and 23, the Honourable Member would see there is an outline of the performance of the Barbados Labour Party, between 2003 and 2007, about the Transport Board and transport in Barbados.

His Honour K. ST.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, when one looks at their promises and performance, as they tried to indicate, one would see that very little, if at all, has been done. Sir, the only thing that is included in this Manifesto is that they purchased 100 new buses between 2006/2007. Sir, I would want to say that out of that 100 buses they bought, 99 of them were parked at Weymouth. Mr. Speaker, with the assistance of UCAL and L&N, those buses were repaired. Sir, some of those buses were parked because of minor problems, like needing an alternator.

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas speaks about sabotage, but when one looks at what is happening at Vault Road, Sir, what greater sabotage to our road network is there?

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I have not yet spoken on this particular amendment. All I did was make an interjection in the morning session in relation to a point of order made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. Therefore, I would like to ask the Honourable Member for St. Michael East to withdraw that remark because I have not yet spoken on the issue in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to withdraw that remark.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, I heard the word "sabotage".

Asides.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I will move on because in these Chambers...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I keep telling Members to refrain from shouting across this Chamber like that. I also keep having to tell Members to keep addressing the Chair and to ignore the comments as much as you can. Do not get into the cross-talk, please.

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I will obey the orders of the Chair, but I know for sure that my sons were never on remand at Her Majesty's Prisons. My sons were never arrested and charged in this country for...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, how is that relevant to the matter under discussion. Honourable Member, please be relevant to the matter under discussion.

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, time is longer than twine and that matter will be dealt with in another forum. Sir, I am saying that the Government of the Democratic Labour Party is serious about transport in this country. Sir, they are so serious, that we have decided that we would have dialogue. We want to recognise that there are problems with private sector operators and we have developed a programme at the Barbados Community College to allow those persons, who once recognise they have problems, to go there to train them in the effective management of their business and in dealing with the general commuters of Barbados and, Sir, we are seeing the fruit of our good labour.

Mr. Speaker, one should not be side-tracked with respect to the former Minister of School Meals. Sir, when one looks at what is happening with this Administration in respect of what is happening at the Transport Board...

Asides.

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: I heard the Honourable Member for St. George North talked about the Chairman micro-managing but, Sir, I am saying that the Chairman of the Transport Board is not micro-managing. Sir, policies are set and the Chairman is ensuring that those policies are effectively carried out. One talks about sabotage but this Government, despite whatever political persuasion you are, looks in a holistic way at the development of Barbados. If the Honourable Members on the Other Side could indicate any Members of the Transport Board, who were sent home under this Administration, tell them to bring their names.

Sir, the same Chairman, who they say is micro-managing, is an all-embracing Chairman. He is not concerned about the political situation. His main focus is to ensure that the job is done at the Transport Board and to ensure that commuters feel safe and comfortable. There will always be teething problems in any new systems.

Asides.

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Those words are familiar with Honourable Members on the Other Side. They heard about the word "thieving" and the word "teething" is synonymous with that so when they hear the word "teething", they think you are saying the word "thieving"

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. In light of what the Honourable Member has said, I hope he is not casting aspersions or imputations on This Side suggesting that we are so intimately connected with thieving that we are

Mr. SPEAKER: No, I am sure he is not. Please continue, Honourable Member.

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Sir, when one looks at what is happening at the Transport Board, you will find that the over-expenditure that existed under the last Administration would be a thing of the past under this Administration. I want to give the Minister a word of warning and encourage him to continue with his programme.

A lot of the buses in the private sector are old buses, but the owners have a proper maintenance programme in place where the vehicle does not work on a particular day and the day is designated for maintenance. You cannot do the same with the buses at the Transport Board but you could rotate the process of maintenance so that those vehicles that are maintained today, would be maintained one month down the road.

Mr. Speaker, there is no need for this mad rush to spend money to buy new vehicles when you have buses that are available where the money could be used for something else down the road. Sir, the maintenance of the vehicles cost less than what new buses would cost. Sir, all we need to do is to have a proper maintenance programme and to train and retrain the workers at the Transport Board to make them aware that the buses they are driving belong to the people of Barbados, that they must take good care of them.

Mr. Speaker, in any one regard, do not believe that because you go to a politician and receive a letter that they are the Lord God, unto themselves at the Transport Board. They should treat the tools that provide them with daily bread with respect.

Mr. Speaker, I am urging the Minister to ensure that his Board institutes training and re-training of the staff at the Transport Board, so that we could have an effective transport system with regards to the Transport Board in this country.

Sir, in my wrapping up, I want to say that I fully support the increase in the numbers. I am sure that as the Minister spoke, he would have a serious road maintenance programme. I am sure with the serious road maintenance programme that the transport system, working hand in hand with a proper road system would be much better.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the issue of public transport almost always excites considerable debate, certainly in Barbados. Sir, even though it is true that because of reality high incomes and access to credit, the Barbadian populace, as a whole, now has more access to private vehicles like private motor cars and private vans and such like, ultimately, it is clear that Barbadians including those who have their own private transport, are keenly interested in the development of the public transport system of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, let me note from the outset that as much as we are discussing the Barbados Transport Board here today, we still have to bear in mind that the Transport Board is not the only entity that makes transportation available to the general public.

2.10 p.m.

In many respects there are those who would tell you that privately owned minibuses and privately owned ZRs operate in competition against the Transport Board, but clearly in the interest of a global holistic approach to public transport, we are in an era where there must be a synergy developed between the two elements, to ensure that Barbados as a whole derives some benefit.

I am suggesting that the question of public transport should embrace an approach through a policy of integrating privately owned vehicles that serve the public, with the transport system, at the level of group rationalisation, at the level of planning and at the level of operating hours.

Sir, practical experience would show that the Transport Board is made to pay a disproportionate burden at what people call "low time" or "dead time." Sometimes on some Sundays and Saturday afternoons in certain parts of Barbados, you will see Transport Board buses, but not minibuses or ZRs. In rural Barbados very few minibuses and ZRs operate on Sundays, some bank holidays and Saturday evenings, because they perceive that such an operation would be unprofitable.

The question of group rationalisation has emerged in this debate, and I want to say that the Barbados Labour

Party Administration of 1976 to 1985, set about developing complete new routes, making places that were inaccessible to public transport accessible, and devising strategies by which the Barbadian public can improve.

Let me give you an example. Before 1976, Sargeant Street, St. John, used to see a bus, usually an Elite bus, at 6.00 a.m, 12.00 noon, 6.00 p.m, slam bam, thank you Ma'am. Where the Rocklyn and other privately owned concessionaires operated, the motive was to capture segments of the market at certain prime times, without the accompanying social conscience that should govern an issue as important as this.

Public transport is not just about moving people from place to place, as was said by the last Honourable Member. It has implications for national productivity. If people get to work late through bad public transport and therefore, do not put in enough human hours - I was going to say man hours, but in this era it is dangerous saying man hours, because you can be labelled as being sexiest without being able and being sexy. So, we have to be very careful how we proceed.

We had a system in Barbados where certain rural routes were clearly deprived and a lot of that has changed. I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Honourable Member for St. George North who delivered a very fine speech, a speech that commended itself to encomium, even if not flattery.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise an issue that is of importance. All Honourable Members in this Chamber must be aware that the Barbados Transport Board has a route called the "City Circle." The "City Circle" must be as profitable as the privately run Route 15 mini buses and ZRs have proven to be. That "City Circle" takes in a number of captive areas. That has interested me in looking at matters within my own Constituency.

Sir, the Whim, St. Peter, craves transport and it does not have to be through the Transport Board. The Edwards and the Kings from the North and others stand ready, through their experience in public transport, to not only go through the Whim, but to embrace places like French Village, Orange Hill, St. Peter, Lonesome Hill, Four Hill and Westmoreland, a cleverly devised rationalisation of the route, with certain strategic locations they identified would go a long way towards improving things in the North of Barbados.

I am saying that perhaps the time has come where the Minister responsible for Public Works, would look favourably at applications coming out of the North from persons who are interested in operating minibuses and ZRs in northern places.

In fact, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, ironically, is really a man from the North, but like one other distinguished Member, he moved from his residence of origin into another place, perhaps proving that a prophet is not without some honour save in his own country and among his own people. Perhaps proving that, I do not know.

Sir, I want to say that the time has clearly come when the Transport Board must transcend those historical forces that have constrained it. In the 1950s, when a Transport Board was conceived, even though there were several private concessionaires, the conception of a Barbados Transport Board also coincided with an emerging developing thinking that a national insurance system would shortly have come about after the Transport Board had been established.

The point I am making is this. The Transport Board was about to be established in the 1950s. A National Insurance Scheme was already being discussed in the 1950s, to follow 11 or 12 years after.

When the Transport Board Act was passed, because of the feeling that the National Insurance system would be able to provide proper pensions, there was no provision, as the Honourable Member for St. George North said, for Transport Board employees to get pensions from the Transport Board. I wonder how many other statutory corporations today can say that their employees cannot access a pension from the Statutory Board for which they work.

The time has clearly come when the management of the Transport Board, especially now that it is going to be expanded, should consider that the average driver and lowly paid persons at the Transport Board cannot only access National Insurance pension. There is no pension scheme for Transport Board workers as a whole. A few at the top of the system might derive some pensions, at the level of management, but clearly the drivers and general workers do not. We have to look at that.

At the same time, the emerging improving morale among bus drivers at the Transport Board must be made to grow even greater. The emerging improving morale of those who drive Transport Board buses must be encouraged. They are getting more and more courteous. They are getting more and more sensitive to the plight of all with whom they interact. Some of them, ironically, used to operate not without some irresponsibility when they drove ZRs and minibuses.

Sir, the Transport Board has provided new systems by which there is ongoing training of bus drivers. There is an ongoing policy to encourage them to develop their professionalism better and in this regard, as was said, the

Barbados Community College is playing a role, and that role would have been started not in January 2008, that role would have been started before January 15, 2008.

Sir, on the question of signage, there was something, and I am going to be fair, of a rush, a hurry and a flurry to put up some signs in Barbados around World Cup, florescent signs, some very small, some badly located and such like, but apart from those, in traditional areas there is a need for better sinage.

2.20 p.m.

I was in the Constituency of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West yesterday and got lost. It was only through the love of caring Barbadians, who guided me to my proper destination. I rambled in Rockley New Road because to find No. 3 and No. 4 is not so easy. There is No. 2 highlighted without telling you that you have to go through No. 2 to get to No. 3 and No. 4. Therefore, I rambled for some considerable time, much to the amusement of those who were jogging and exercising in the area, so we have to improve our signage.

As the Honourable Minister said, we also have to ensure that our roads are strong. We have to do something about the potholes. We must have a new approach to road building, where we bear in mind that rain, wind and sun can badly affect poorly built roads. We have to make sure that our potholes, which cause problems for users of the road and also threaten the sanctity and integrity of vehicles are cast aside.

Mr. Speaker, when the Barbados Labour Party was the Government, probably under the watch of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, extensive road works were done from Orange Hill to Trents. I want a post-work evaluation carried out.

A lady called Ms. Maynard would be able to advise the Minister and the Government on the niggling problems that have persisted since that road was built. At the same time, the transport along that road is unpredictable, as unpredictable as the transport to the two Rock Halls.

Sir, there is a bus leaving St. Peter to go to Rock Hall, St. Andrew and you get a bus leaving Bridgetown to go to Rock Hall, St. Andrew. The bus leaving Bridgetown is more reliable than the one leaving Speightstown, often because of the attitude of the Inspectors, who sometimes only send a bus when they feel inclined to do so, without regard to the fact that there should be a scheduling of how buses move and when buses move.

The big world as the Honourable Member for Christ Church South said, is accustomed to two things, making the maximum use of the vehicles, whether the vehicles are

new or old, and making provisions for proper maintenance, routing and scheduling at the same time. We have come to a point in Barbados' history, where we need to do proper scheduling, where if a bus is supposed to leave somewhere at 7:00, it leaves at 7:00, and if a bus is supposed to reach somewhere at 7:30, it reaches there at 7:30. We have to be studious about these things.

We have to engage the private sector, those who own mini buses and ZRs to observe the schedules and the Law. Some of them in the private sector are still stopping in the wrong places. Some of them are still stopping around corners. Some of them are sometimes stopping to block traffic from passing, in the event that a competitor is behind them. Some of them drive slowly and keep back traffic from behind in the hope that sloth would bring business, because they estimate that the timing of the arrival of particular passengers is about to come and if they go too fast, then they would miss that business.

Sir, in that the Barbados Community College is working out a programme, by which public transport is to be imbued with greater professionalism, we need to encourage these people who operate these vehicles for profit, to note that the road to profit involves professionalism, a sense of being considerate, not only make sense, but is timely and is in the interest of our nation.

I want to see a system where the welfare of the workers of the Transport Board is enhanced. Therefore, I agree that those operators who drive late into the night and who are at risk, that protective measures are implemented to protect their lives, while at the same time, giving them assurances about the security of their jobs.

Sir, while talking about security of jobs, despite what I said about transport workers not being pensionable, at the Transport Board there is still a system of temporary officers and permanent officers. There are persons at the Transport Board who are unappointed. In other words, who are akin to civil servants in the general Civil Service, who are not appointed. We are going to have to look at how we deal with matters like that, because we are in an era where people need assurances and workers are at their most productive, when they are absolutely sure about their security of tenure.

A few years ago, Mr. Speaker, something happened in this country. Our Government, the Barbados Labour Party Government, was most worried about the workshop at Weymouth at the Transport Board. Sir, to cut a long story short, the United Commercial Auto Works Limited (UCAL) evolved. Sir, one remarkable thing about this is that here was a body of mechanics, skilled at the level of the artisan, not at the level of the university graduate.

Here was a group of working class people, challenged to do something about their future and with the help of the Barbados Workers' Union, which to its credit got involved on their side, the UCAL has developed into a truly professional workshop, with two depots, where customer service is excellent. They have a mixed clientele, not just consisting of Transport Board buses to be fixed, but the Royal Barbados Police Force use UCAL, the Ambassadors, Consulates, Embassies and High Commissions send their cars to UCAL. I believe that UCAL may even have a 24-hour system of operation.

I want to say in no uncertain terms that UCAL is a success story, is evidence of the typical working-class man given an opportunity, being able to show his or her worth, clearly evidence of entrepreneurship, properly conceived and executed.

I congratulate the United Commercial Auto Works Limited for what they have done. Weaker persons would have panicked and in their fear that they could not access income, would have given up, but we have seen a new business emerge and a business that is indigenous, a business that is good for what it does and a business that has done our country justly proud.

I conclude, Sir, by saying that my biggest problem as the Honourable Member for St. James North is, not just that there are potholes in roads, that there are some tenantry roads similar to what you get in St. Lucy, but it is how to get the Government to appease those persons in Greenwich Village, who feel aggrieved that the road-works there have not been done in a way to take into account their sensitivities, and who feel aggrieved that the system of public transport does not favour their interest.

4.29 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us to ensure that all entities that make their services available to the general public, can do so in an environment that permits them to operate properly, and in which they can be as profitable as they can be, in the circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, I want to urge all Honourable Members not to stick in the past, clinging to what wrongs could have been committed at the Transport Board for the last 50 years, but to look forward to a future transport system that will be efficient and that will in turn assist all workers to be effective and efficient in the pursuit of their jobs and careers.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill before this Honourable House. At the onset, I would point out that you and I, having been schooled at that great institution in St. John called the Lodge School, would know that we had a dedicated school bus service back in the 1970s when we were there, so I am very surprised to hear the Honourable Member for St. George North suggesting that the dedicated school bus service to the Lodge School only started in the last 14 years of the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, I note also that the Honourable Member for St. James North rebutted his chief spokesman on this Bill, the Honourable Member for St. George North. The Honourable Member for St. George North bragged about the signs that his Ministry under the Barbados Labour Party Government erected in time for the Cricket World Cup, and the Honourable Member for St. James North in his speech talked about these signs being too small and it was a rushed job, so I congratulate the Honourable Member for St. James North for being honest.

The Honourable Member for St. James North also talked about the emerging improving morale of the Transport Board drivers and encouraging this. Again, I can say that the morale of the Transport Board drivers and indeed the entire staff was boosted tremendously when the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, took the initiative to host the entire staff of the Transport Board a few Sundays ago at his official residence at Ilaro Court. Mr. Speaker, I was in attendance and I could tell you that the morale of those workers was very high coming out of that initiative. They felt appreciated. This is the nature of the Democratic Labour Party, we care.

The Honourable Member for St. James North also talked about a pension scheme for the Transport Board drivers. Mr. Speaker, at that same reception I remember the leading trade union spokesman for the Transport Board staff stating publicly, that words had reached him that this Democratic Labour Party would in fact be introducing such a pension scheme for the Transport Board staff, so we are on top of the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard the Honourable Member for St. George North talked about security systems that the Barbados Labour Party Government had planned and various studies were being done. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the track record of the Barbados Labour Party Government is really horrendous in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, you and I know that walkie talkies were introduced at one stage. Where did the walkie-talkies disappear to? By the time the Barbados Labour Party Government left office, you could not see a single walkie-talkie functional on the Transport Board buses, so they do not have any track record of security systems for buses.

That is just a lot of long talk and a lot of hot air that the public of Barbados did not buy, and rejected the Barbados Labour Party in the last General Elections.

Mr. Speaker, in talking about track record, the Barbados Labour Party Government mis-managed the Transport Board to the extent that there was a chronic shortage of buses due to break-downs after break-downs. Mr. Speaker, passengers who used the Transport Board to get to work and to church especially on Sundays had to wait hours for a half-hour service and so on.

Mr. Speaker, there was a heavy concentration of scenic tours on Sundays, and scores of buses were pulled from the regular scheduled services, and passengers had to wait for hours to get a bus to get to work and therefore their jobs were in question and they were not able to get to church and so on.

Mr. Speaker, in talking about security, I am of the view that the Barbados Labour Party did not remember security, when I am sure that reports would have reached them, that school children were alleged to have been engaging in sex while travelling on the buses. Mr. Speaker, this is an area that concerns me. I believe that we could provide more mirrors in the buses and train the drivers to be vigilant, and, in fact, ban the school children from sitting on one another and encourage the schools to deploy prefects and Members of staff where possible to be on these buses.

Mr. Speaker, I have a knowledge of this having been, and continues to be, someone who travels on public transportation. I was a teacher for many years and I know that the presence of staff Members who may have to travel on the school buses would help to supervise those children so they do not get involved in such deviant behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that with the free access to the Transport Board buses by the school children, that the juvenile justice system has reported less deviant behaviour on the part of children, because they are now anxious to get to school and they are not sort of contaminated, by a lot of the “dutty” lyrics.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East talked about “dutty” lyrics in terms of the garbage that comes out sometimes from some of those songs in the minibuses and the ZR vans.

While I am on that point, Mr. Speaker, I am publicly suggesting that the Government and people of Barbados should ban music being played on the PSVs. It is banned on the Transport Board buses and I am saying it should be banned on the ZRs and minibuses. I know there was a court case which that sector won in terms of saying that you needed a radio to know about the weather and the traffic,

but I am saying that it does not seem to bother the Transport Board.

Mr. Speaker, most of the music being played on the ZRs and minibuses are CDs and so on with a lot of really horrible lyrics. I have nothing against calypso, 'bashment' and reggae. I like the art form, the music, the genre, but it is the bad lyrics which I do not support, where they promote homophobia, the killing of batty boys, as they say. I do not support homosexuality. I am saying that they have rights and we cannot be encouraging young people through lyrics on these ZRs to shoot or beat the first homosexual they see.

There is also a disrespect for the Police in some of these songs, saying Babylon is a fraud. There is also the promotion of use and abuse of illegal substances talking about marijuana. Sometimes they create confusion. They say that cocaine is bad, but smoke all the herb you want.

Mr. Speaker, this is sending mixed signals to the young people. There is also the promotion of illicit sexual activity and the lack of respect for women. All of these negative lyrics are contaminating our young people on a daily basis when they travel on those ZRs and minibuses. Mr. Speaker, if we ban that music, then that problem is solved, because even if they want to go into the clubs, you have to be an adult to go to a dub fete or what have you. Mr. Speaker, we have to protect those young minors who are the future leaders of our society.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James North again frankly condemned the wrong practices of some of the ZRs and minibuses in terms of driving too slowly and blocking the roads, as they set down and pick up passengers to make sure that their competitors do not overtake. Mr. Speaker, a lot of this comes from the fact that they are paid on a commission basis. The drivers or the conductors will get so many cents per passenger.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes the owner would tell his driver or conductor to bring in so much hundreds of dollars a day and the rest is theirs. Therefore, this leads to competition among each other and to overcrowding the buses, sometimes in situations where these conductors put young school children to sit in the laps of big hardbacked men and women. Sir, this is not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view that I would encourage the owners and drivers of these ZRs and minibuses, if they do not comply, that Government would actually insist that they are paid a decent fixed wage. Sir, the drivers and conductors have rights too. They have families to feed. Sir, when you look at the logic of it, I am saying that if we change that remuneration system for drivers and

conductors of these ZRs and minibuses, where they are given a fixed salary, there would be no need for them to rebel, to go off route or to drive fast and carelessly.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are some ZRs and minibus owners who actually support this measure. Sir, I look forward to these owners instituting this measure that would solve that problem, once and for all, thereby reducing the risk to life and limb of passengers, crew, and even the travelling public in our country. It would also reduce the need for limited police resources to be deployed to manage that system, in a situation where the police could go about dealing with issues of violent crime and other things in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we are thinking of, and I urge this country and the social commentators to address this issue in a frank way. I am not waging war against any person, but I am saying that we have to look at the national development of our country as a whole, and that we have to cut out the nonsense wherever it exists.

Mr. Speaker, in so doing, we must, therefore, discourage ZRs, minibuses and even Transport Board personnel - even though we do not get that problem with them - from using cellular and drinking alcoholic beverages while driving. Sir, I am talking from experience, because up to last Sunday, I was using public transportation.

Sir, Members of the public cry out when travelling on minibuses or ZRs, that they see drivers and conductors actually drinking stouts, brandy and bull. These drivers and conductors sometimes smoke and you do not know what they are smoking, thus endangering the lives of the travelling public.

Sir, I am speaking frankly because we have to put a stop to this nonsense, because any person who is injured due to this poor driving by these persons under the influence of any of those things I have spoken about, could either be you or me. It does not have to be the driver or conductor himself/ It could be an oncoming vehicle or pedestrian. Therefore, this nonsense has to be stopped.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that the Honourable Member for St. George North in his presentation has ridiculed the Democratic Labour Party for introducing the taxpayer-funded access to school children by Transport Board buses. The Honourable Member talked about the fact that the Democratic Labour Party was all about freeness. Sir, what is wrong with giving free access to public transportation, which would free up thousands of dollars for those poor parents, who otherwise would have had to pay that bus fare for their children? This allows them to buy food and uniforms for their children.

Mr. Speaker, that is consistent with the approach of the Barbados Labour Party over the years. Sir, I understand that when the Democratic Labour Party Government in the 1960s introduced fully taxpayer-funded education from primary to tertiary, the Barbados Labour Party at that time vociferously opposed it and said that it would break the Treasury. Therefore, the same old rhetoric is coming from the conservative Barbados Labour Party perspective.

Sir, this Democratic Labour Party will not be fazed. This Government is committed to the enhancement of the masses of our country, the working class, the vulnerable who look to Government to care for them and to give them ease in these challenging economic times.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about accommodation. The Honourable Member for St. George North talked about their plans for the upgrade of the ZRs and minibus terminal at Cheapside. Sir, could you believe that - because you and I would remember - this Honourable Member, as Opposition Member for the City of Bridgetown, before the last General Election, had to publicly condemn the then Barbados Labour Party when, leading up to Cricket World Cup, 2007, they dumped a lot of nasty marl that was filled with urine, roaches, PVC toilet pipes, et cetera, forcing the sluice to exit that area in rocky terrain, threatening the safety and health of pregnant commuters.

Sir, I congratulate those ZR men and others who recently took the bull by the horn, and at their own expense, levelled off that area, without waiting for Government's assistance.

Mr. Speaker, the approach of the Barbados Labour Party for accommodation for commuters in these public terminals is atrocious. Do you remember they built the Princess Alice Bus Terminal? It is an opened shed where the covering was so inadequate that the travelling public would be exposed to the elements. Those people could not get an enclosed terminal, as was constructed at Fairchild Street or at Speightstown.

The Barbados Labour Party was being a penny wise and a pound foolish, but I look forward to the Democratic Labour Party Government building a massive terminal there that could incorporate the ZRs and minibuses in a multi-functional way. Sir, I believe the same thing could occur at Speightstown, where minibuses coming to Speightstown from the north do not have a proper terminal. These are far-reaching comprehensive approaches to accommodation.

Mr. Speaker, let us not speak about the public toilets. Both you and I know that before the last General Election, there was a front page picture in the Sunday Sun, where we saw the messy toilets at the Fairchild Street Bus Terminal. This was under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party.

There were no doors provided for the toilets and commuters had to relieve themselves in full view of the general public. That terminal was also cracking at the seam, due to poor construction.

Sir, I congratulate the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, the Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport, because he grabbed the bull by the horn. I accompanied him and his team to the Fairchild Bus Terminal, where we saw the problem. Sir, I want to say that within days the Honourable Member had that problem solved. Sir, we are not about talk. The Barbados Labour Party had the public toilets at Cheapside in such a mess, to such an extent that the men had to go into the female toilets because the male toilets were left to run to ruin. There was that contemptuous situation. There was no respect to the travelling female public in our community.

Mr. Speaker, that is the track record of the Barbados Labour Party and so they should go and pay penance and ask the Lord for forgiveness, in terms of the terrible mismanagement of the affairs of our country. Sir, do they now have the temerity to come and talk about public transport in our country? Let them wheel and come again.

Mr. Speaker, the ZRs and minibus terminal at the River Bus Stand, under the Barbados Labour Party, was operated in such a way that on Sundays the waiting area for toilets was closed. There was nobody deployed there to open those toilets and so Members of the travelling public had to get wet in the rain or baked in the sun. Do they care about poor people? They were giving all types of concessions to the rich and famous.

They were giving concessions in special development areas. There were people getting fat while the poor people in Barbados were being treated like second-class citizens, with nowhere to sit in the River Bus Stand or other terminals such as Cheapside. They had to stand.

Mr. Speaker, relief is here. I assure the public that we have a broad team in the Democratic Labour Party Government. Your humble servant is not ashamed to say I am a commuter on public transportation and I will ensure that the perspective of the masses of our country is always addressed and therefore, all is well.

2.50 p.m.

I again congratulate the Honourable Member for Christ Church South for steering the ship of the Ministry of Transport and Works and Transport in general, steadily and faithfully forward in the interest of the public.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged to you. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, in a day and age like this when you could get a suggestion that allowing school children to travel on a school bus is freedom, is blindness to a social policy of an enlightened Government. Clearly, one has to recognise that in any developing country, especially when the masses of people have to travel from home to work, it is very important to ensure that you keep transportation cost at a level, because it impacts on the total production cost of producing goods in a particular country.

Sir, in any country that you allow the transportation cost to be very high, you also allow the wage bill to be very high. Sir, I am saying that it was a part of the Democratic Labour Party's social policy, which started as far back as free secondary education, and it is only a continuation that we are ensuring that we make Barbados productive again.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make the point that once you have a good transportation system and everything is working correctly, it also saves foreign exchange in the country of Barbados.

Sir, I want to give an example. Under the Barbados Labour Party from the period 1995 to 2008. The Constituency of St. Lucy was able to increase the number of motor cars by 1 834 and that was done in a matter of 13 years. In other words, what it took us nearly 400 years to do, because of the bad transportation system, we were able to do in 13 years. Sir, this is only St. Lucy of which I speak, it has nothing to do with the next 29 Constituencies.

Sir, if in St. Lucy alone, the number of vehicles could increase by 1 834 in less than 13 years, one could only understand what the road system would be, if we continue to allow the Transport Board to run down and we do not restructure the Transport Board to make it attractive once again so that persons would gravitate to the Transport Board once again to ease the squeeze in our transportation system.

Mr. Speaker, it was a master stroke. We diverted the workers from having to go to Bridgetown and all the other schools. Sir, what occurred was that the school children were told there was no need to stop your parents from getting to work late or leaving work early to pick up school children but the children were given a proper system so that they could get on buses without parents having to interfere with the transportation system. Sir, we have a way of ignoring important things and on top of this, they allowed the road system to fall into disrepair causing the buses to be destroyed.

You are seeing a proactive Government providing money to ensure that the roads of Barbados are better, so that the maintenance cost - when we speak of maintenance cost, we have to understand that we do not have unlimited foreign exchange and we must maximise our foreign exchange. Sir, all of that has been done in less than 10 months.

Mr. Speaker, the management of the Transport Board must also recognise that in rural Barbados, re-routing is going to be very important. We cannot afford to allow the management of the Transport Board to continue to operate the same routes they were operating now for more than 40 years, without recognising that there are other areas that have been developed and you need to have the bus system going through there, so that it would not force people to buy vehicles, when there is no need for them to buy vehicles and when they do not want to buy vehicles. Sir, because there is not a proper routing system, people are forced to buy vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, for example, if you live in Cluffs, St. Lucy, you have to get off by Greenidges corner and walk nearly a mile when there is a road wide enough and long enough for the Transport Board to traverse. Sir, even though they have been written on many occasions, they have refused to take heed. Sir, it is the same thing for Rockfield and Bishops et cetera. Sir, we have to understand that the workers must treat the commuters in a different light. We have to understand that we are one people. I will not stand by and allow people to abuse each other.

Mr. Speaker, for example, there are some people working at the Transport Board, who believe that places like Connell Town, Josey Hill and Pie Corner should not get buses. Sir, I am saying that in a day and age like today, that it cannot be fair. You cannot have one person telling a whole set of persons that he will give a bus when he feels like, when, according to the roster, the bus should have been there already. Sir, there are people who believe they can treat people as they like but they do not understand that it comes a time when the reverse is true.

Mr. Speaker, those who believe that they could play with the people of St. Lucy by ensuring they take away the bus service from them, must understand that some day there will be a day of recognising.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I should try to make my intervention as short as possible.

Sir, I want to commend the workers of the Transport Board for continuing to offer quality service to the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I know this is already a document of this Honourable Chamber, but I wish to put in context, the performance of the Barbados Labour Party, between the five-year period of 2003 to 2008. It refers to our performance, what we promised the people of Barbados in the transportation sector and what we were able to deliver, because I was amazed last week to hear from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and others that the Constituencies of St. John, St. Lucy and St. George South being left out of a Barbados Labour Party's mandate to facilitate the rehabilitation and the construction of roads and bridges in their tenure of office, over the last five years.

3.00 p.m.

This document at page 22, and 22 refers to - and I am going to take extracts. It speaks to 11 roads being rehabilitated.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what document are you referring?

Miss C.Y. FORDE: The promises that were in the Manifesto of 2003, and the performance of the Barbados Labour Party adhering to promises, because we see our Manifesto as a document that we must conform with. Therefore, these are the performances.

Sir, 11 roads were rehabilitated under a special Scotland District Project touching St. John, St. Joseph, St. Andrew and St. Thomas. Sir, 20 roads were completed in St. George, 16 in St. Philip, 10 in St. James, 45 in St. Michael, in St. Thomas, 30 in Christ Church, 7 in St. Joseph, 5 in St. Lucy, 10 in St. John, 8 in St. Peter and 3 in St. Andrew, between 2003 and 2008.

Sir, I know that the Honourable Member...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. John.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I am very reluctant to interrupt the Honourable Member, but I believe that grave injustice is being done to the Parliament of this country for the Honourable Member to quote a document as inaccurate as one written by the Barbados Labour Party, boasting of things that have never occurred.

First of all, there has never been any rehabilitation of any roads in the Scotland District, by the Barbados Labour Party. The only road that was done in 14 years in the Scotland District was a short stretch of road in Foster Hall,

St. John, and the people in Foster Hall know why that road was done. Other than that, another short stretch of road in Sargeant Street. The completion of a road in Society, by Brathwaite Construction, which had been started and earmarked by the Democratic Labour Party. There were no 10 roads done by the Barbados Labour Party for the entire 14-year period.

Sir, I am not going to quarrel, because the Honourable Member has a chance to take that document and do this Honourable House a favour, identify the 10 roads that were done in St. John. Do not just say 10 roads. If it is a question of performance, we should have the specific information. Parliament should be given a list of the specific roads that were done and full disclosure.

Sir, I am saying for the records that document is inaccurate. It is wrong. It is propaganda and it should therefore be rejected by this Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I perhaps could say so of the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto, but I am going to give them a chance to let the policies and programmes that they outlined work.

Sir, I also want to make mention, according to this document and my knowledge ...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please allow the Honourable Member to make her contribution in peace, as they say. Honourable Member for St. Thomas, please continue.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for protecting my rights. I appreciate it, Sir.

Sir, the introduction of 5 specially equipped buses also resulted in new and reliable services for disabled Barbadians. There were partly achieved when we purchased 100 buses in 2006/2007. There are many other aspects. I can speak for the ones in St. Thomas, but I will not dwell on that now because I have a few important points I would wish to make.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: You should be in the Vault Road because you are a dead Prime Minister.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the incorporation of new bus routes were pursued by the Barbados Labour Party when it was the Government of the day. The Barbados Labour Party, that I have been a Member of for many years, did not specifically concentrate on hand-picking particular Constituencies as I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church South say, in relation to St. Lucy and St. John. It recognised that all Barbadians are taxpayers and the maintenance of the roads in all the Constituencies and bridges should take place, and will be pursued to ensure that all Barbadians have good passage.

Sir, all Constituencies received that assistance. There was maintenance during our tenure, road maintenance, bridge construction, new road maintenance, street lighting and drainage.

Sir, I too have needs in the parish of St. Thomas and the same way that Honourable Members would come in here to speak of their constituents, I thank the people of St. Thomas for allowing me the privilege to speak for them, because they do not have the avenues through which to speak. We can hold town hall meetings, too, but I am going to send the information as directly as possible to the agencies that I know must provide the services we mentioned.

Sir, I want to make mention of Lion Castle Bridge where there was no construction, but the bridge collapsed in 2004/2005 and \$299 000 was voted last October to have that bridge rehabilitated. The Lion Castle road is now one-way because the Endeavour aspect of the road has now run to ruins. That road leads through Hangman's Hill and on to Deans Village/Hopewell. That road has not been touched by this Administration, even though the money was voted to have the road rehabilitated. The residents are complaining and I speak for them. The road is still impassable.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please. Just a minute. Honourable Member. Honourable Members, I keep having to remind Members of your behaviour when you are not speaking. I take the opportunity again to draw your attention to Standing Order No.33, Behaviour of Members not speaking. "A Member whilst present in the House during a debate must at all times conduct himself with dignity and decorum and must maintain silence except when called to speak by the Chair."

The intention is, of course, that Honourable Members must be in a position to make their contribution without harassment and so on, so that we can understand what is being said. I am asking you to refrain from this cross talk across the Floor so that the Honourable Member can be heard. Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

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

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John said he does not know the roads. I want to refer to the Estimates of 2007-2008; White Hill, Fruitful Hill, Bath Beach Road, the stabilization of Melvin's Hill, Bissex and other roads. I can speak of Shorey Village, because the Honourable Member said that none were done in 14 years. I can speak of the Richman Road, St. Joseph, that has collapsed without interference.

Mr. SPEAKER: I recognise the Honourable Member for St. Lucy on this point.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member first presented a set of Estimates and treated the Estimates as actual. The record would show that Estimates are exactly what they are, the estimation of what Government is about to do. It is not actual.

Sir, I am not worried about what occurred out of the mouth of the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. I am worried that the document was given to that Honourable Member to mislead that Member.

3.10 p.m.

Sir, I do not think it is fear that a senior Member of Parliament would do that to another Member.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member said that I said no roads had been done in 14 years. Then she sought to call the names of roads that are not in St. John. I am responding to what she said about St. John.

Sir, about 10 roads being done and roads being rehabilitated. There were only two tenantry roads done in the Constituency of St. John. Sir, only one major road rehabilitation was undertaken and that is the same Bath Beach road, which is still ongoing.

In 1994, the road at Glenburnie, Foster Hall broke away in rains shortly after that Government was elected and that remained inaccessible. Sir, that main artery along the East Coast remained closed for nearly 12 years. I do not blame the Honourable Member for St. George North, because he tried his best in the end. It is not completed, because the piece in front of the Mayers' has not been done, and the Mayers have suffered land slippage, which damaged their house, not as a result of anybody privately excavating, as happened in Vault Road.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you concretise the point of order?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, we are going to have to include in the next year's Estimates, money to repair Vault Road, where a resident and a prominent citizen of St. George carelessly, negligently, recklessly undertook construction and excavation and mashed up the people's public road and is now getting up in here talking about whether the previous Government undertook roads.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I still maintain that the people of St. George are taxpayers too, and they are being heavily taxed by this Government. The Government of Barbados has to fix the roads in St. Thomas, as they will in St. Lucy, St. John or anywhere else. Mr. Speaker, the Stoney Gully to Fortress Hill Road has been out of operation for nearly a year.

Sir, while the Ministry of Transport and Works' staff at Bagatelle has been doing exceptionally good work, and this has always been my consistent comment, the gabion baskets and everything else to go with that major artery have been removed to Walmer Lodge and that road remains impassable to this day.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak of the Vault Road because the Vault Road is a road that was done in 2000 to 2001. The Honourable Member for St. John and his Minister of Public Works, who now operates with a reduced portfolio so he would have time for a quarter day of work, to go the Vault Road and take the necessary photographs, where he can see only four inches of bitumen and all the rest is mud. Sir, perhaps it is a blessing in disguise that no bus...

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, because there is no necessity for anybody in here to go. I cannot refer to the newspaper but on November 21, I woke up in a good mood. It was my father's 75th birthday, only to read the newspaper, and see an entire area of the same Vault Road, we did not build it, that was part of the talk in the St. Thomas By-Election, Vault Road and how badly the people had been treated.

The previous Government built a road which has now collapsed. I hope the contractor would explain to us that it was not his work that caused it to collapse. Again, it was the negligence and the recklessness of a private citizen.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that point has been made already from your mouth, just a minute ago, in connection with the same point of order.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: All right. Sir, the Honourable Member therefore should not blame the contractor. The blame should fall where it should fall, and if people undertake reckless work, which does damage, they should pay the Government for the damage that they have done.

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

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the \$100 000 that the Honourable Member now has a new car was not in the Budget either.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member can say what he likes, therefore, I shall continue to make my comment.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas knows that you cannot incur expenditure, unless provision had been in the Estimates. I do not know if it happened in the previous Government.

The original Estimates were drawn up by That Side of the House. We came and found Estimates in place, which included the expenditure to which the Honourable Member for St. Thomas is referring. Sir, we are now told that we arranged for the purchase of something, that the previous Government arranged to be purchased.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, St. Thomas is a community that touches Welchman Hall, Chapman's Village and so on. Sir, we have lost two households in Carrington's Village, as a result of the Scotland District slippage in 2006/2007, where those two families have had to be relocated to Farmers, Phase 2. Sir, the hill to the east of CBC's antenna, collapsed and destroyed the bathrooms and all the other aspects of those houses. The same thing happened in Chapman Village, where residents have been relocated to Blackmans.

Sir, there was no construction on the Richmond Road leading to the Flower Forest, no construction but the road there collapsed and a Barbados Labour Party Government sought to have it rehabilitated. I know that any Government would have to work in the Scotland District to rehabilitate roads, because of the problems.

Mr. Speaker, I go further. The road at Vaucluse coming from the factory yard leading to Dukes Tenantry is also a serious source of concern. If the Honourable Member would use the other three quarters of the day now, to look at the correspondence that has been sent by me,

over the last two years, the Honourable Member would see where the popular Vacluse Road, coming from the West Coast, leading to the various places of interest in that beautiful parish, is now impassable and has been for sometime.

The Chief Deputy Officer, his Deputy and others have visited the area more than twice, over the last year and a half, and saw the Vacluse Road, where water has settled to about three to four feet, as is the case today. Sir, I have the photograph. I have written and I will send those copies to the current Minister.

Sir, I mentioned Fortress Hill, leading to Stoney Gully. I have mentioned the Vault Road and the Honourable Member has also done that. I have mentioned Lion's Castle.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that the road leading from Vacluse to Dukes and the Challenor Centre, is only now being flooded. I can assure you that road has been flooded now for more than five years. It is nothing new. The Honourable Member knows that I would know that because I had to traverse that road every morning and evening, taking my son to and from school at the Challenor School.

Therefore, the Honourable Member would know that it cannot be the Government of 10 months that has not corrected that problem, but it has been a longstanding problem. Sir, I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Thomas that something should be done with it. The only thing is, that it should have been done long ago.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the Vacluse Road is a road in St. Thomas, not St. Lucy. I live in St. Thomas and I can speak of that road, Sir, as well the former correspondence that was sent to the Ministry of Public Works over the two years and up until present.

3.26 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I will send copies of the formal correspondence that would have been sent to the Ministry of Transport and Works over the last two years to the Minister so that measures can be put in place to have that road rehabilitated. Mr. Speaker, that road is on a slope, funny enough, and having raised the sidewalks for the construction taking place near there, the wells seem to have been closed as a result.

Mr. Speaker, I am not quibbling on that. The point I am making is that there are four roads leading into the

parish that are now impassable. Therefore, I am asking the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works to treat to at least one road to help those visitors and locals to have easier access to get to a church, to the post office or wherever.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to another point. Mr. Speaker, I am a person who believes that sharing should take place. I have asked my colleagues, I have written as well...

Mr. Speaker, some of these roads have become worse because of the unseasonable rains that we have experienced this year. The Prime Minister has gone public to speak about the challenge. He has even gone further to identify a Minister of Drainage. That says that kind of challenge has caught the Honourable Member for St. John's attention, and I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, Canefield Road leading from SturgesCarrington's Village through to the same Vacluse or through to Airy Cot and on to Duncans is in the worst condition. What I saw on the television from St. Lucy the other night is nowhere to be compared with that road that leads from that location.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, it is because we had unseasonable rains. If the Honourable Member for St. Michael East is living elsewhere, then he has to make a visit closer to his real matrimonial home and he would know about the road.

His Honour K. St.C BEST: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, please. Tell us how.

His Honour K. St.C BEST: Where I reside belongs to me. The roadworks in St. Philip under the Barbados Labour Party...

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C BEST: Yes, I live in St. Philip in my house not in St. Thomas that the road has been destroyed by you. By choice I chose that and by choice your son gun butt people.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the road that leads to Mount Hillaby, the highest point in this country, was scheduled for repaving last year. All plans were in place. To this day the people of Mount Hillaby are suffering

because of the heavy rainfall and the water running on the road that has caused that road to break in. Therefore, I am asking for attention to be paid to that.

Mr. Speaker, the Walkes Spring Road leading to Ashford is another road with a problem. The Jack-in-the-Box Road that brings people from all the way in the same St. Philip and St. George to take them to St. James and St. Lucy through St. Thomas, has craters because of the incessant rains and the poor drainage that is in the area. The Bloomsbury Road through to Mount Wilton coming from Sturges is ready to collapse.

There is correspondence. It is not that they have not written the Minister of Transport and Works under the Honourable Member for St. George North. Under the current Administration, correspondence is there. Sir, we need to get some action, not only in St. Lucy or St. John that appear to me to be preferential, because if you are talking tourism, if you are taking tourists and locals to the various places of interest in the parish, and there are about 12 of them, then I need for some action to take place where this is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to the Barbados Water Authority for the new mains that were installed, but that too has impacted on the roads and bridges in the parish and they really need that kind of rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, the Rural Development Commission has done some excellent work across the length and breadth of Barbados. I know that the roads that have been done by the Rural Development Commission have been able to withstand the test of a lot of the water because I believe that the drainage systems are better than the traditional roads that I have mentioned earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I would like for the Rural Development Commission to assist with some of my 60 tenantry roads that are in dire need of upgrades. I have had some between 2003 and 2008, Bridgefield, Exchange, Rock Hampton and Spring Farm, and therefore I am grateful.

Mr. Speaker, other Honourable Members can make mention of the roads in rural communities that would have been able to service those residents who really need it more than anyone else.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I would wish to draw to the Honourable Minister's attention is the issue of public transportation. For the last five years, I will keep belabouring the point, I have indicated that persons who live in Clifton Hill, Walkes Spring, Exchange, Bibby's Lane, Lears and Hotherosal Turning, are suffering for public transportation. I have written numerous letters indicating that there were PSV operators who are interested in working legitimately on the route.

To this day, Mr. Speaker, there are an extremely large number of pirate vehicles on that route. I believe that the travelling public deserves to get an opportunity to travel in the public vehicles whether there be public service or otherwise and not pirates because you know, Mr. Speaker - you have your legal training and I respect that a lot - if anyone becomes injured or if anyone dies, God forbids it, we know of the tremendous challenges that would take place as a result.

I am making another special plea for the Transport Board service or the private concessionaires in the PSVs to at least have two buses on that route to facilitate the needs of the residents from Clifton Hill and coming all the way down, because they are at the tail end of the particular bus route.

Mr. Speaker, I support the school bus system that the Honourable Members have spoken about in their Budget because I know that there are parents out there who are in need. What my challenge has been, and I have been saying that since the Budget, is where the minibus and the PSV operators are concerned.

The Honourable Minister spoke this morning and said that in 2007 the rider-ship was approximately 274 000 and that by September 2008, it was 612 909, an increase of 123 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I feel concerned for those PSV operators and owners who for the last four or five months have been heading to either Mangrove or Weymouth to get diesel for their vehicles to be going. Sir, it has a spiralling effect in that some of the gas stations that heavily relied on the service from those PSVs have to close off earlier at night now than ever before because they lost the business. I believe that as the petrol is lowered that they would again be attracted to those gas stations. Sir, we must be cognisant that quite a few of those gas station employees have been sent home because they have lost the business from the PSVs.

Mr. Speaker, I can speak of Sam, B85 in Jackson, and the excellent work that he is doing. Sir, I left home this morning around 20 to 10 (9:40) and I saw children exiting the Transport Board bus to cross the street to the Lester Vaughan School. I am not saying that the children were wandering around Bridgetown or that they were jolly riding although that too is a challenge.

Asides.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Whether I am the watchman or not, Mr. Speaker, it does not matter. I am not going to watch what is on the Internet. I will watch the children of Barbados who are traversing to school, whether they be in the minibuses or the Government buses.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East knows very well that whenever I saw things that I did not like about his minibuses, I used my moral development and upbringing to call him and speak to him. I also called the other minibus owners to say what I saw and asked them to ask their drivers to curb what was going on, so I am consistent. Therefore, I am going to have that watchful eye for the people of Barbados.

3.30 p.m.

Sir, we speak about human resource development and we know that we have absolutely nothing else to hold us up as a people, but the people. Therefore, I shall continue to do what I have to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage those children who may be joy-riding to stamp it out. The quality of education being offered says that they need to capitalise on it, in order to develop. I know of parents who are complaining that it is difficult for them to get from St. Thomas to Bridgetown, were it not for a few minibuses, because they cannot access Government buses because of the way those buses are rostered. Sir, I have no problem in drawing that problem to the attention of this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I believe you should be concluding at this stage.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, however, I want to question the amendment to which we are referring today because I believe, accordingly as the Honourable Member for Christ Church South said in his presentation this morning, they want to increase the number from seven to nine Board Members. I believe when the Board was being constituted, that it should have been the first criterion to make sure the persons put on the Board had the expertise, the interest and everything else that goes with it, to ensure that the Transport Board is being managed properly. Sir, if that is not the case, then I do not think we should come here in a willy-nilly fashion and increase it by two persons, to say Government wants to bring in people with expertise. I do not support that.

I believe if the Board is not functioning as effectively as the Honourable Minister thinks, then those persons should hand in their instruments to the Honourable Minister, so that those persons out of the seven who have the expertise, the interest and development of the Transport Board, would get the opportunity to be able to pursue the work and the interest of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I would like the Honourable Member for Christ Church South to tell the people of Barbados about the \$40 000 that went missing from the Transport Board during the first month of the operation,

when the minibuses and ZRs were filled up at the Transport Board yard. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure this Honourable Chamber of our noting of the many contributions that have been made today on what is a simple amendment to the Transport Board Act, which is to allow the numbers of the Board to be moved from seven to nine and to allow the expertise we identified earlier to be put in place.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Honourable Members who have made useful and usable contributions. We will certainly take on board those ideas that are workable. It is the first of my knowing that by placing items in an Estimate or by voting sums for items, actually means that the project is done.

The Honourable Member for St. George North has sought to convince this Honourable Chamber that is the way he did business, that once it was in the Estimates, as far as he was concerned, the project was done. The truth is far from that, as we were able to indicate, in the case of Bath Road, where completion is still far away.

Mr. Speaker, the important areas for conclusion, for example, the bus terminals, et cetera, will have our urgent attention. Sir, I trust too that when the officers in the Ministry are ready and the invoice for repair work on the Vault Road is prepared, as I believe they have gone there today to make their first preliminary inspection, I trust that invoice would be duly passed on to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas for settlement.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, seconded by Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, seconded by Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, seconded by Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Transport Board (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

3.40 p.m.

RECOMMITTAL QUESTION TIME

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Will the Prime Minister please state whether it is the intention of this Government to build a new hospital or refurbish the existing plant? If the answer is to build a new hospital, will the Prime Minister state the cost of constructing such and how Government intends to finance such structure? Alternatively, if the intention is to refurbish the existing plant, will the Prime Minister state the cost of such refurbishment?

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PUBLIC SERVICE GENERAL ORDER, 2008.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It is with great pleasure that I rise to move this Resolution, which relates to the compensation package for Government workers in Barbados. The last accord governing the compensation package to Government workers would have expired on March 31, 2008. Subsequently, the National Union of Public Workers submitted its proposals on August 5, 2008, and CTUSAB made its submission on August 20, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, as a little background to what has been agreed and the impact it would have on the economy of Barbados, I think it is necessary to point out that for the fiscal year 2008/2009, that a government would spend approximately \$1 billion on salaries. This figure includes the wages component of transfers to Statutory Boards, which depend for their funding also from our Consolidated Fund, so that given these figures the National Union of Public Workers' proposals, the proposals they made originally was for 15 per cent increase, 9 per cent from April 1, 2008 and 6 per cent from April 1, 2009, would

have cost the Treasury of Barbados \$95 million in the first year and an additional \$69 million in the second year.

The CTUSAB proposal, which was a sliding scale increase of 14 per cent at the top and 20 per cent at the bottom over two years, would have resulted in a cost of \$91 million in year one and \$98 million in year 2.

Mr. Speaker, the rationale for salary increases, of course, in the first place to maintain the purchasing power of workers and thereafter to allow them to share in any economic or productivity gains, where those gains have been realised. Sir, in the final analysis, such increases have to be determined by Government's ability to pay as well as the economic impact of such increases and also against the background of the economic situation, either as it is in a positive sense or in the sense of what it is projected to be over a period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the last salary agreement covered the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008 and entailed a 10 per cent increase of 7.5 per cent in the first year and 2.5 per cent in the second year, so that was a 10 per cent increase. However, inflation over that period amounted to 10.5 per cent. Therefore, over the period of the last agreement, the purchasing power of the public sector workers declined marginally.

Mr. Speaker, in July of this year, the Central Bank of Barbados projected inflation for 2008 at 8 per cent. However, as you know, based on the reduction in fuel prices and also in other prices, it is clear that the rate might moderate, given the significant decline in those prices. You have had a reduction in the price of oil and we have passed on that reduction to the consumers as quickly as we can, bearing in mind that there is also the significant debt run up by the previous Administration, which they now want to pretend does not exist, or they want to deny, that has to be cleared. Sir, that is a very important and significant point that has to be recognised.

There are other countries in the Caribbean grappling with how to deal with the significant subsidies that have been in place. In Barbados, with the cooperation of the people of this country, not the Opposition, but the people of Barbados, as a whole, we have been able to start the process of clearing that debt, which then puts us in a position that should we have to make any further adjustments later on, they would not be as painful because we sought to deal with the financial implications of the subsidies as they exist.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just one moment, please. In terms of clarity, just for the Chair...

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I was about to say, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that even though there are separate Orders,

that I am seeking to deal with them, as is usual, all together, unless there is any objection.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just identify which Orders. Are they Orders 5 to 13?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes, Sir, Orders 5 to 13. You may want to clarify if that is acceptable.

Mr. SPEAKER: Let us treat it as a motion and have a seconder, so that we could have it clarified.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Order No. 5 to Order No. 13 be treated as one debate.

Hon. F.J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House debate those matters listed Order 5 to Order 13 as one debate was put and resolved in the affirmation without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I did not say that from the outset, but I know that Honourable Members on the Other Side would understand the nature of this matter. Sir, I was pointing out how we were dealing with it.

Earlier today you would have heard the debate in this House how we have sought to reduce the transportation cost to all workers in Barbados who have children travelling on public transport, how we have sought to increase pensions in almost all categories and even in this Order, there will be provision for increases in pension, how we have sought by our measures to accelerate the Reverse Tax Credit benefit which will benefit all persons earning below a certain amount by the end of this year and, generally speaking, in the early stages of the Administration, how we sought to maintain subsidies in respect of certain items, so as to moderate the impact of the tremendous increase that was being experienced.

Mr. Speaker, we believe, however, that in the outcome, particularly since the collapse of the financial markets, and since other international economic concerns have taken precedence, that there will be further reductions in the prices of some of the staple commodities, and it is anticipated that there would be a further reduction in the price of oil to be passed on.

3.50 p.m.

Sir, we need to understand that we buy oil from other persons, and we buy them based on prevailing market

prices. We cannot, as happens in some countries, adjust the price as you would see on television. There are some people who act as if when they watch CNN on mornings, they should leave their house, and they are encouraged in this by Honourable Members on the Other Side, and go to a gas pump and that whatever price is quoted on CNN should be available at the gas pump in Barbados by the time they get there.

Sir, sometimes there is a two-week lag, even longer. Therefore, I condemn the kind of reckless statements which have emerged again, even in the face of what Honourable Members have on the records in this Honourable House of their position regarding borrowing to finance present consumption. They are still persisting, even though the Government said that we have a debt to pay, and there is only one way you can pay a debt. We are not going to go and borrow money to finance that debt, because we will still have to pay back the money that we borrow to finance it.

Sir, one day, I heard people get up in here and said that the banks will give you money, because of Government's credit rating, to pay for the exorbitant increase in oil prices as well as the subsidy which had been incurred by the previous Administration and negligently ignored in the years leading up to the Election.

There are people who criticised PetroCaribe and said that it was only a financing arrangement and Barbados should not get involved in those kinds of arrangements, but who are now acting as if there was no debt to be repaid, and as if we can pass on the benefits immediately. We never promised that and I am not promising it now. What we did promise is the prudent management of the Barbados economy. That is why we are able to offer in this package a salary increase to public workers, that would be the highest increase over a two-year period in the last 14 years. If you want me to put it another way, the previous Government was not able to offer an increase of this size for the entire period for which they were in office. Even with the increased VAT, even with the levels of growth, even with the high inflation...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You work it out. Do not let the per cent or dollar value humbug you. It could not be dollar value. You work it out. If I am wrong, challenge me. I am not giving you the figures. You all just now went for the Estimates, very quickly to assist the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, even though it was of no assistance, but the Estimates are still there. The fiscal out-turn figures are still there and it would show what was paid in respect of salaries for every year.

I want to help the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, so that he does not make the errors today that he made on the last occasion. The documents are there on his desk. Carefully go through them, and it would show you that this is the highest increase in the past 14 years, in this country.

Sir, let me get back to the negotiations so that nobody can introduce any element of mala fides against the persons who participated in the negotiating exercise. The start of our negotiation was delayed because, of course, there was a view that the framework within which these negotiations should be undertaken should be against the background of the Social Partnership.

However, as we know, there is a basis, both in conformity with the ILO Convention and otherwise, that would require the Government of Barbados to enter into negotiations. We entered into them and we came to a conclusion with the National Union of Public Workers, but that did not stop us from having a discussion with CTUSAB, relative to the state of the global economy, relative to the state of the Barbados economy, and relative to the strategies that we would employ, in relation to our Incomes Policy as a whole, not just in the public sector but as a whole.

Sir, I am alarmed again, and I do not take my political cue from critics or from misguided persons, but sometimes one has to correct the public record.

For the past 14 years it was drilled into the heads of Barbadians that we operate under a Social Partnership. Four Protocols were negotiated and the basis of our national governance, was that there existed a Social Partnership which meant that workers' representatives, the private sector and Government sat down and planned the economic direction of this country.

When we faced a crisis as a result of 9/11, we were told that the Social Partnership met and came to certain conclusions. Leading up to every Estimate, we were told there was a national consultation, and the Social Partnership met and came to certain conclusions.

Every time there was a crisis of any type in this country, we were told that the Social Partnership intervened to solve those problems. All of a sudden we are hearing that the Minister of Finance alone should present to the country a plan to take us out of the economic challenges that we face. All of a sudden the Social Partnership does not exist.

During debates in the Other Place, you heard people say how alarmed they are that this crisis has been going on, and the Minister has not come up with a plan. I have heard it in here. If you go on the Internet you would see that it

was also being said elsewhere. All of a sudden the people who took the Social Partnership that the Democratic Labour Party had introduced to deal with the problem of the challenges of incomes and prices in this country, extended it, fashioned it, such that very often this very Parliament did not find out what was going on until after the Social Partnership, which includes persons who were not elected to the positions they hold, and I do not hide my mouth.

I said that from the first meeting I had with them, that 14 years later I thought that it would be desirable, at least, to see that everybody at the table was elected by a transparent procedure. I was shocked to discover that was still not the case. This is your principal entity of governance in this country.

The Leader of Government has to face the people. The leaders of the unions have to face the people, but unfortunately we have to help them in this regard.

The private sector has not been able to come up with a mechanism in place, to be able to come up with a transparent methodology for electing the person who represents them. I have no problem with the person who currently represents them. I have not had any problem with the one who represented me in the 1990s. However, I am saying what is good for the goose, is good for the gander. All of a sudden there is no Social Partnership now. The Government is to come up with a plan. They are so alarmed with what is happening in the economy, the Government is sitting idly by.

4.00 p.m.

Nerl is fiddling while Rome burns. We have done nothing since the so called economic crisis began at the end of September and we are now in the beginning of December. We are to come up with an immediate war plan.

What we did, we met with the social partnership, but we have been meeting even before the crisis emerged. We had a discussion on the cost of living. We had a discussion on the global economic environment. Developments occurred.

We set up a working group, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Winston Cox, the Executive Director of the IADB, representative. We have prominent Barbadians, Dr. Delisle Worrell, a former Director of Research and former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, representatives of the public sector, the Director of Finance, the UWI is represented, CTUSAB had two representatives.

We said, gentlemen, we have a social partnership. The social partnership is now represented by you. We want

you to sit down and look at the issues in the global economic environment and seek to make plans.

We had a consultation, and the most important element of that consultation was that the economist and financial advisers to Barbados could not agree on the depth of the economic down-turn, the reach of the economic down-turn or the length of the economic down-turn. Many of its characteristics were still unknown.

We just came from a Heads of Government meeting in which all of the Heads of Governments of the Caribbean attended. In each case different countries are facing different challenges. The challenges that Barbados face in its tourism sector are not the challenges faced even by its closest competitors. The challenges that we face in relation to reduction in remittances in countries like Jamaica and Guyana, are not the same challenges faced in a country like Barbados, because there is not as high a component of our GDP, and in many cases, ours are exclusively focussed on building investments by returning nationals.

Sir, you can go through all of the areas of economic activity. Our banking sector in Barbados is not challenged in the same way because of its ownership structure.

Sir, as I said, Government alone is to stand up and enunciate a war plan, even against a background of persons who every year got in here and extolled the virtue of the social partnership, laid every protocol, used the TV cameras to show that there was such a partnership and how much it had done for Barbados; went all over the world and said that Barbados was a model democracy, because we had a social partnership.

Sir, now that we are facing one of our biggest economic challenges, they have forgotten that the Social Partnership exists. The Minister of Finance and Leader is to say to Barbadians what is the plan.

Sir, once it is said by persons at a certain level, that the Pavlovian instinct that is so common to the Opposition then kicks in and it goes lower and lower down the system, until you hear people repeating that there is no economic plan for Barbados to deal with the challenges that we face.

Sir, as I said, fortunately, we have the social partnership and we have mature trade unionists in this country. They do not always have to agree collectively and I do not think it is any diminution of the status of any movement that they are partners in it, who do not agree on everything.

Sir, in my experience, even with the social partnership, there have been technicians who have disagreed with some of Government's approaches and even within Government itself, there have been differences of

opinion. There are people who oppose the counter-cyclical measures viciously, while sitting on That Side. Then, months later, they were the principal advisers to the then substantive Minister of Finance. Therefore, these things are common in a democracy.

Mr. Speaker, people forget that they oppose subsidies and months later, they say that we should continue them. Sir, people who did not support the differential in the price of diesel and knew nothing about it - and I will get to that shortly, Mr. Speaker, because that information is also available - pretended that they were the architects of the differential in the diesel price and that the motivation was to assist manufacturers.

Sir, like the great pretenders, they act as if they were on the right side of every issue, but when you scratch the surface and do a little research, you find out that it never went down that way. As the young people would say, it did not go down like that, and sometimes they do not feature anywhere in those major decisions that were made. But there is nothing wrong with writing your own hagiography and putting yourself as a main player in events in which you had no part. Mr. Speaker, that is usual, because it happens all the time.

In the British system where we read biographies of men who find themselves in the middle of events, where nobody even reMembers that they existed, but they find some way of locating themselves at the centre of decision-making at critical times.

Sir, there are also men who are in the centre of the decision-making, but they are so self effacing that they step back and pull back when the bright lights are on, and they decide this is not for them. As I say, it therefore pains me sometimes when I see the contortions to which some people go through. As I said, this is the highest settlement that Government has come to, in the past 14 years. We are conscious of the reasons we had to come to such a settlement.

The National Union of Public Workers's position was very clear. They felt that they had a duty and responsibility to protect the purchasing power of their Members and therefore had to seek a salary settlement that reflected the inflation rate, even though it took into account, the uncertain economic environment. I think that is an eminently reasonable position.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Government of Barbados acknowledges that the inflation rate was uncomfortably high, but we also took the position that a responsible approach that avoided fiscal recklessness, impropriety or imprudence, had to be taken. We had to

point out that we were spending about 46 per cent of current revenue on wages and any decline in economic activity could result in a fall in revenue, which then could have its impact in relation to the percentage spent on wages, pushing it into dis-equilibrium.

I therefore think that both sides came to the conclusion that what was good for the economy of Barbados was in the best interest of the public officers of this country. Again, I compliment them for their maturity.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Therefore, the 10.5 per cent was agreed to, against the background that it was fair to workers, and it would not do any damage to the economy.

Of course, there was a view that there should be a sliding scale introduced. There has not been a sliding scale in the past 14 years, except in one instance. I think there are some differences that need to be appreciated, in relation to the public sector.

4.10 p.m.

I think that the wage structure in the Barbados public sector is highly compressed at a ratio of 6.3:1. That is, that a Permanent Secretary receives a salary which is just over six times that of a maid. In 1960, the ratio was 15:1 and in 1970, it was 10:1.

Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that we should go back to those days of the significant differentials, because we believe in social justice and equity and we believe that citizens should enjoy a reasonable standard of living at a minimum below which nobody should go. That point about the differential is the point that has been made on several occasions. Therefore, while wages at the bottom of the public sector are competitive with the private sector, wages at the top are not competitive with the private sector. We all know that. Therefore, it has an impact on Government's ability to attract and retain competent professionals and senior management staff. It is one of the challenges we have with the Town and Country Planning Office.

There are a number of other specialised areas of Government activity in which, either after you are trained or even when you are training people, they are already earmarked for positions in the private sector, or in the quasi public sector at levels much higher than that which they would enjoy if they had remained in the public sector in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, if you look, therefore, at the differentials of Government, a maid or a general worker receives over \$400 a week, cashiers at gas stations in

Barbados receive about \$250 to \$300 a week, while cashiers in the public sector, even before this increase, earn in excess of \$450 a week, so there is a differential of some significance between public and private sector wages.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to go into the impact of the differential unless that is necessary. I want to point out that under the previous Administration, there were six wages settlement and on only one occasion was a sliding scale method used, and that was with the very first settlement.

Mr. Speaker, we must bear in mind that when the first settlement came, the economy was growing at four per cent. We must also bear in mind that the Democratic Labour Party left an economy that was firing on three cylinders in 1994. We must also bear in mind that by 1997 the Government had introduced reforms to the indirect tax system that netted them significant sums of money over and above that which was projected, but the sliding scale was not introduced except on the first occasion. Mr. Speaker, even then when it was introduced the difference between the top and the bottom was only 1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, while I think on the surface the concept of the sliding scale might appear to be more socially equitable, I also think that we need to look at the reality of public sector wages in Barbados and recognise what some of the challenges are.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is well known that the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados has not accepted Government's offer of 10.5 per cent over two years. Mr. Speaker, the history of agreements is as follows:

In the 1997 to 1999 agreement, both the National Union of Public Workers' and the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados agreed. In 1999-2000, only the National Union of Public Workers agreed. In the 2001-2003 settlement, only the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados agreed. In 2003-2006, only the National Union of Public Workers' agreed, and in 2006-2008, only the National Union of Public Workers agreed.

As I said, this 10.5 per cent increase is larger than any increase given by the previous Administration.

Mr. Speaker, it is also worth mentioning that the Central Bank of Barbados, Standard and Poor's, which the previous Government relied so heavily on in assessing its economic capacity and ability, as well as other agencies have commented very favourably on the level of increases agreed to with the National Union of Public Workers' and have described them as reasonable and in the interest of Barbados' economy.

Mr. Speaker, the gross cost to the economy of the agreement with the National Union of Public Workers would amount to approximately \$65 million in the first year and \$52 million in the second year. It is also estimated that there would be 25 per cent take back from direct taxes and an additional sum from indirect taxes. The cost of increases to allowance is estimated at \$852 000 in year one and \$675 000 in year two. Therefore, the net increase in cost, once the accord is fully implemented, would be about \$80 million. This would push expenditure on wages to approximately 48.5 per cent of current revenue based on projected revenue for 2008-2009.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make one final point, which, as I said, is a credit to the National Union of Public Workers and the ability of its negotiators in this regard. The agreement for a 10.5 per cent increase amounts to 70 per cent of what the National Union of Public Workers originally requested. This can be compared to previous settlements. Between 2001-2003, they requested 12 per cent, but only got 5.75 per cent, which was 47.9 per cent of what they requested. In 2003 to 2007, they requested 15 per cent, but they only got 8 per cent, which was a 53.33 per cent of what they had requested. Mr. Speaker, they are getting 70 per cent of what they requested in this settlement.

I know the Honourable Member for Christ Church West likes these figures. He would not find this in that book, so he could make a note of this one.

In the settlement for 2006-2008, the National Union of Public Workers requested 21 per cent and received 10 per cent, which was 47.6 per cent of what they requested. Mr. Speaker, in every sense of the word, based on what was requested, based on what is fiscally prudent in Barbados and based on what is desirable, even in relation to the projected inflation rate - remember the settlement was below the inflation rate last time around - on this occasion this settlement is higher than the projected inflation rate - is 70 per cent of what the National Union of Public Workers requested, and it has been hailed as a sensible and prudent settlement.

On those bases, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that these Resolutions do now pass.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, if I had any doubt that the Honourable Member for St. John and Minister of Finance was on the back foot, all doubts would have been erased given the last presentation.

Mr. Speaker, I have never seen a Minister of Finance tried to work so hard to use esoteric statistics to try to convince workers in Barbados today that they have been given a fair deal by the Government of Barbados amidst all of the increases, not just in the cost of living but also in the fees and taxes which they have had to face in this calendar year 2008.

Sir, they would be forgiven, as workers, for believing that better could have been done coming from an Administration who, prior to their election in January of this year, spoke in such expansive terms as to what the public servants of this country ought to receive, things that they later encapsulated in their Manifesto, things ranging such as duty free cars for designated public servants, for policemen, for nurses and for teachers as outlined by the Honourable Member for St. John when he did his Budget Reply in 2007.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, they would have been forgiven for believing that better could have been done, coming from an Administration that promised them the establishment of a Home Ownership Revolving Fund, to deliver interest-free mortgages for those public servants who had not yet owned a house, but who would want to do so. They would be forgiven for believing that better could be done, coming from a Prime Minister who announced that his priority No. 1 was cost of living, his priority No. 2 was cost of living, and his priority No. 3 was cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, if you understand and appreciate that, you could better understand why the last few minutes of the Honourable Member's speech concentrated on trying to say what percentage of the National Union of Public Workers demands were met, et cetera.

Sir, when this debate in this Honourable Chamber is finished, it does not change the reality of the experience of that public servant, who has to pay either a mortgage or rent, who has to buy groceries at the supermarket, who has to deal with gasoline and diesel prices, who has to pay road tax or land tax. Mr. Speaker, that public servant is constrained by the salary which they receive unless, for some good reason, they have received some kind of gift that the majority of them are unlikely to have benefitted from.

Mr. Speaker, I speak deliberately in these terms this evening, because it is easy for those of us who speak in this Honourable Chamber to become so consumed with the terms and parameters of a debate, that we forget what we are talking about are the actual abilities of families and workers to be able to provide for themselves.

Sir, it is tempting to engage in a prosecution of the Government, particularly given the promises they made, particularly given their lack of performance, but what is the reality? What is the reality of the fate of that public servant with this wage increase today?

Sir, let me put it into context. The objective of any Government ought to be at minimum, that is, maintaining the purchasing power of the worker. Sir, no Government wants to preside over a reduction in the workers' purchasing power. In other words, the things I could have bought last year with my salary, I should be able to buy this year, for the most part, with my salary. Therefore, any reduction in purchasing power would place those families on the "back foot" and would result in a reduction in their quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, that is what both political parties in Barbados, when it comes to taking the best of the political rhetoric, want to see. Why then is there a disconnect between what is being brought before this Parliament today and the political rhetoric that you would otherwise hear from the Democratic Labour Party?

Mr. Speaker, let me explain. In every year, when we were in Government, we committed ourselves to one precept. That is, that purchasing power of workers should be maintained. In every year, with the settlement agreed upon, with the increases legislated, it was in excess of inflation.

On the last occasion, which was debated in this Parliament in 2003, so conscious were we that we were entering into a volatile period that we agreed to a decision that in spite of the amounts which we were legislating as increases, we would also make a provision for a trigger for a cost of living allowance. Therefore, once the cost of living went beyond 5 per cent, immediately, without further negotiation, a 2 per cent cost of living allowance would be paid to the workers of this country.

Sir, technically-speaking, the statement which the Prime Minister has made that the last occasion did not keep pace with inflation was not true, because the agreement took into account a trigger for a cost of living allowance.

Sir, if I were to be asked what astounded me the most about this settlement which comes before this Honourable Chamber, it would be, in fact, the absence of a trigger for a cost of living allowance, coming from a Government that says cost of living is No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 priority, and from a union that said to us, in 2003, that they could not, in all conscience, agree to a wages settlement against the background within which we were functioning.

Sir, at the time of the wages' negotiations, it was only volatility in energy, not volatility in energy and food prices, as we saw in the last year., and in circumstances where the reports of the Central Bank and the Statistical Department showed that the point-to-point inflation in Barbados for the first time in three years had reached double-digit figures in July of this year.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, when the Democratic Labour Party was making all the noise last year about cost of living, do you know that the cost of living had never reached double digits on a point-to-point basis? Do you know that this year it has far surpassed what it was in 2006, and that this year is comparable only to 2005, which, because of 2005, a cost of living allowance was triggered in 2006, and the workers got more money?

Mr. Speaker, let us start from that point, because what we are doing here today must mean more than a political debate. It must translate into real benefits for workers. Sir, I say to you that the most disappointing aspect of what has been presented to this Honourable Chamber today has been the failure of this Government to ensure that the increases in year one, which is 6 per cent, would meet the likely inflation rate, which on their estimates at best would be 8 per cent, likely to be 9 per cent.

At one time the level of inflation might have been 10 per cent, but it is likely to be 8.5 or 9 per cent, given the moderation in the last two or three months in oil and food prices.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that if you know that, how could you, in all conscience, ask workers in this country to agree to accept a lesser sum, when the additional cost to Government would be less than \$19 million that has been written off for the Barbados Turf Club (BTC) within recent weeks?

Mr. Speaker, therefore, if we want to talk about choices, let us talk about choices, because the Government could equally have agreed, at this stage, even if they wanted to hold it at 6 per cent until now, until the out-turn figures for inflation were available, given the volatility. We could not object to that and say that if inflation goes above 6 per cent, Government is prepared to give the workers of this county "X" percentage.

Mr. Speaker, there is one aspect of the Prime Minister's comments that I agree with and that is in relation to the need for us not to revert to a sliding scale. Sir, where I differ with the Prime Minister is that I believe there is still room for a cost of living allowance to be provided to workers at the bottom of the scale, those who are the most vulnerable, that will be a far higher allowance than anything that would be paid to persons, who are at the

middle and top end of the scale. Therefore, you do not distort their wages, but at the same time, you protect those persons when they are going to the supermarket. You protect those persons when they have now to find that the road tax has gone from \$265 to \$400. You protect those persons when they have to find that even with the fifth reduction yesterday, it is no where near what it ought to be, given the fact that the price of oil - I listened to the Prime Minister carefully - has consistently been below US\$50 for over four weeks.

4.30 p.m.

He said, and I agree, that there is a lag, but when the price is below US\$50 for four weeks, you would at least expect, that given that US\$50 is less than half of what this Government found it at in January, when it was US\$104, you would not expect that with the price of oil at less than half what it was, that diesel would be \$0.53 cents more than what it was in January, Sir, \$0.53 cents less, maybe, Sir, but not more.

You would not expect that the price of bottle gas would be \$37.00 for a 100-lb bottled than it was in January of this year, yet the price of oil and gas for more than a month has been at lower levels than it was in January of this year. Sir, you ask yourself, at what point does the Government stop price gouging the consumers of this country?

Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to be sensational...

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, if I am succeeding, it is only because the actions of the Government are so unbelievably dastardly, that you cannot believe that a Government that would set itself priority No. 1, 2 and 3 as cost of living, a Government that would seek to castigate the private sector on every occasion for price gouging, in some cases, justifiably so, but that they would recognise that they need first to examine their own conduct, just as we did in November and December, when we removed and reduced duties on products ranging from beef, lamb, pork, all kinds of other vegetables, deodorant and all kinds of other products in the basket of goods, just as we tried to do when we agreed that there should be a basket of healthy food items.

The Cabinet of Barbados agreed and Elections came before it was implemented, but this Government does not believe that there needs to be a basket of healthy food items exempted from certain taxes, Value Added and import taxes that exist, to be able to reduce them so that people can be encouraged to continue spending to buy things like olive oil, nuts, unsweetened fruit juices and all the other things that the diabetics use, the Interex, the Glucorex and

all the various things that people use, Sir, none of those things are the subject of a package before this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to these things because one of the significant features of the last package of measures for the increase of salary that came before this Chamber, was that it came against the background of an ambitious tax reform programme, both in income taxes and land taxes.

Sir, on the occasion of that debate, I recall us making the point that a messenger, who would have been receiving a gross salary of \$20 230 a year would, all of a sudden, as a result of the changes in the income tax band and the income tax allowances, carrying it up and reducing the band from the basic rate from 22 per cent to 22.5 per cent and the marginal rate from 40 per cent to 37.5 per cent. In the case of a messenger, he would only have been paying a basic rate and that messenger would have received \$1 310 in hand.

Sir, separate from whatever else that messenger got by way of a tax increase that was above inflation, they would also have received \$1 310 in hand, as a result of the income tax reform. Mr. Speaker, that had nothing to do with the fact that another 19 000 people would have been taken off the land tax role by making the first \$125 000, as it was at the time of the last wage settlement, exempt from taxes. Sir, all those public servants, who live in houses valued at \$125 000 or less that they owned, they would not be paying land taxes while getting a wage settlement that kept apace with inflation.

Sir, when in 2005, inflation did start to move, they did not have to ask their workers' representatives to come back to the table, there was an automatic trigger. The automatic trigger led to this Parliament approving a sum of money to pay the equivalent of a cost of living allowance of 2 per cent to every single public servant in this country.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I say to you that if I had to assess what is before this House, we regret that what is being agreed does not match the inflation rate, which has already been experienced on a point-to-point basis, Sir, in April 7.5 per cent, in May 8.5 per cent, in June 8.9 per cent and in July 10.5 per cent. Sir, we are awaiting anxiously the point-to-point inflation rates for August, September and October as we are awaiting the third term unemployment statistics that are now some three weeks overdue.

I trust and hope that now that we have a new Minister of Economic Affairs, that those figures would be available on a more timely basis. Sir, that was one of the comments we noted the IMF made as well in their Article IV Consultation of this year.

Mr. Speaker, what is also significant is that the only other support I could find for a Government coming in with

a wage settlement before inflation in written form, in the last 24 hours, was the same IMF Article IV Consultation Report, where in that report, the IMF advised the Government to avoid wage indexation to currently high headline inflation. Sir, fancy words, but simply telling the Government, do not use the inflation being experienced this year as a basis for wage increases in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, that is a fancy way of the IMF saying and the Government agreeing that workers in Barbados should not be able to buy this year that which they could afford to buy last year and the year before. Sir, I am saying to you that one of the things that have distinguished this country from others across political parties, generally, has been the extent to which we are prepared to defend the rights of workers and the gains made within the social arena in this country.

Sir, while we accept that the Government would have introduced free bus fares and it would help, certainly a percentage of workers, who have children, it is equally a large per cent who have no children of school age and they, therefore, are facing the increased energy prices; the increased road tax and the increased land taxes.

Sir, the increased land taxes have come about simply as a result of the Government's failure to intervene to adjust downward the land tax rates because once you have a new valuation, a Minister of Finance is in the habit of adjusting downwards the rates of land tax and making adjustment to the bands to ensure there is no onerous burden on the taxpayers for the ownership of land in this country.

Mr. Speaker, a sin of omission is as great in its consequences on the taxpayer as a sin of commission, because only one person in this country, not another fellow, has the opportunity to reduce the rate of taxes on land taxes.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, the workers are meeting this Christmas, receiving these funds for wage increased, thankful as we are that they are getting something against the background of increased Administration fees, increased taxes, against the background of no increase in disposable income, against the background of a wage increase, 6 per cent in this year, 4.5 per cent in next year, but no provision to match it to inflation.

Mr. Speaker, every year we ensure that the wage increase reflected the inflation rate, including in the post-1998 period when inflation rates spiked as a result of the introduction of the Value Added Tax.

4.40 p.m.

Those are the facts. In the last phase, when we could not predict with accuracy, we settled with a trigger mechanism, a higher cost of living allowance.

Sir, all of this comes against the background, and other Honourable Members on This Side would speak to the record of the Barbados Labour Party, in relation to the public servants, from the conversion of 4 000 casual workers to public servants of this country, such that they could have security of tenure, such that they can retire with twice the amount that they would otherwise have received, had they gone home as casual workers, the greatest one, of course.

I think the current Honourable Attorney-General, on reflection, might not want his memoirs or the history of Barbados, to reflect very positively on the fact that a Democratic Labour Party voted against a constitutional amendment to protect wages in this country, when we brought it back earlier in 1995. The fact that separate and distinct, unlike the promises that were made for duty-free cars for policemen, duty-free cars for nurses, duty-free cars for teachers, we were not as ambitious.

We told you that we would pay you for the time you have worked and we would give you a flexibility allowance, and the flexibility for the first time compensated policemen, teachers and nurses for the difficult circumstances under which they had to work, which might not otherwise have been reflected in their pay.

Sir, we recognised that policemen going to Court very often on their off-days were inconvenienced and sometimes in order to collect the administrative records whether they were there for half hour, an hour or two hours, was too cumbersome. So we agreed that every policeman going to Court on his off day would be paid for five hours flat across the board. We agreed that the family of a police who died in the line of duty should not have to face the future alone, and that we would compensate his family with five times his yearly salary. All of those things were put in place.

We agreed and recognised that workers sometimes would be affected by considerations that were not necessarily financial alone, and to that extent, we established and implemented an Employee Assistance Programme, so that people who were having difficulties with alcoholism, people who were having difficulties with bereavement, people who were having difficulties with depression, all of these persons could get the benefit of assistance without having to significantly pull their pockets, and therefore, deprive themselves of treatment.

We agreed that a person who acted in a post, as happened across the Public Service from time of immemorial, where a person may act in a post for three,

four or five years, it was only fair that person be allowed to go home with their pension tied at what they were actually receiving at the higher level, having acted in that position.

Sir, I go into these things because in a sense, it is important for us to see that we have, across all Parties, made a difference to the improvement of public servants in Barbados. It is true that in recent times the Democratic Labour Party lost its way in 1991 to 1994, especially after the job regrading exercise that saw them only regrading those at the very top, and leaving those at the bottom totally unsatisfied, then to put the workers on the front-line of the economic adjustment was an unfortunate thing. It is something they chose to do, but at the same time, we said that we felt that you ought to have the confidence to manage this economy without having to look at the cutting of people's wages as an option.

While the Democratic Labour Party in its early days may have done a lot more, I think that 1991 to 1994 they lost their way, in relation to how the public servants were treated. I trust and hope that the disconnect between their performance at the end of this year, the abuse of public servants by certain Ministers during the course of the last 10 months, will not reflect an indication to return to the 1991 to 1994 days, rather than to return to the better days of their performance in the 1960s, in relation to the provision of public servants.

Sir, as I said, calling public servants and accusing them of sabotage publicly, accusing them of wanting to burn files to be able to hide them from a Government in a sense is unfortunate, because there are some statements that have been made, that would suggest that non-performance is to be laid purely at the feet of the public servants of Barbados rather than an inability to appropriately identify programmes and execute them.

Sir, I say all of this in relation to the Central Government because in a sense the new Public Service Act has done wonders to protect public servants in Barbados from arbitrations, and in the circumstances, it will lead to greater stability and greater professionalisation of the service, in my view.

One of the key things about the Public Service Act, which perhaps got lost in the context of the early part of this year is, it effectively takes back the power of appointment of any officer for more than 3 months, coming from outside the Ministry, and gives that power back to the Public Service Commission and not to the Prime Minister as would have been done as a result of the 1974 Constitutional Amendments. It therefore takes the first most serious step to ensuring the professionalism of the Public Service of Barbados, which I believe to be absolutely necessary.

I feel that we can fight out our political differences in here and outside. I feel that Chairmen of Boards, as I said, can be replaced because they must execute the policy of a Cabinet, but I have a significant problem with Chief Executive Officers and other staff of Statutory Boards being made to go home simply because a government has changed.

Sir, we passed a Resolution at our Annual Conference this year, committing the Barbados Labour Party not to follow that path, specifically rejecting any proposal that would see Chief Executive Officers having to sign a contract that would cause them to resign within 90 days and out of an abundance of caution, I went back in my Cabinet Papers and the newspapers, because the Other Side keeps talking about the hospital. The Hospital incident with the four persons being sent on leave was 1996, almost two years after the Barbados Labour Party was in office, and it was not because of partisan political considerations, but it was because of a failure of financial and administrative mechanisms on the part of the Hospital, having been given the opportunity to report consistently for 2 or 3 months. Sir, those facts are there. They cannot be disputed.

Sir, what I do know is that last week the Courts of Barbados are hearing a matter in relation to a CEO of a Statutory Corporation. Sir, I do know that there is another matter waiting to be heard in relation to a CEO of the Rural Development Commission. I do know that there are other officers that have been sent home at the National Conservation Commission, either directly or constructive dismissal, also at the Grantley Adams International Airport and the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, as recent as last week, in November, a set of most disturbing things happened at the National Conservation Commission where a number of persons who were acting in positions for four or six years, I do not even know if the Cabinet is aware - I even have one here for 10 years acting in the post of a field supervisor, and was forced to return and revert to the junior position.

I trust and hope that I will hear the voices of the unions, in particular, the National Union of Public Workers. I think now that the President of the Union has been elevated to the Manager's position of the National Housing Corporation, he would know how it would feel for another Manager of the National Housing Corporation to have been sent home unceremoniously to make room. The Manager of Sales and Marketing, all of a sudden that post was abolished and the person was sent home and a Manager of Customer Services was created, and the other persons who were sent home at the National Housing Corporation, not a word from the National Union of Public Workers to protect the rights of workers in Statutory Corporations in this country.

4.50 p.m.

I say to you, Sir, that I trust and hope that it was only because the President of the Union was busy settling into his new post of Manager, Customer Services, and that as soon as he settles in, he will be in a position to take up the causes of the many workers, maids, receptionists, all kinds of persons being sent home, and in the central public service of Barbados, people who have not yet gotten the required service for security of tenure, being told to go home, and names being substituted.

Sir, the Other Side can come with any kind of response that they want this evening. Sir, do you know what is distinctive? Diplomatic posts change. We know that those are political appointments, so no diplomatic appointments expect to stay beyond the life of a Government. The current American Ambassador will go home because the President of the United States of America comes to the end of his tenure in January. Sir, what we do not expect to change, are the people working as CEOs, Deputy CEOs, administrative officers, maids, receptionists, clerical officers.

I say to you, Sir, that no amount of banter in here - The banter in 1996, obviously the Minister of Health, who has now been appointed, has not had a chance to read any files, because unfortunately, had he done so, he would at least have known that his predecessor supported the construction of a new Hospital, because his predecessor at least took the Hippocratic Oath and was committed to the welfare of patients. I do not know that I can say the same for the Honourable Member for St. James South.

Sir, I can understand why the Honourable Member for St. James South would be so agitated in this debate. The truth is that there are people from his Constituency in St. James South, who have been asked to revert at the National Conservation Commission (NCC). There are people from his Constituency who have also been affected in this way, so if I was the Honourable Member for St. James South, I would be agitated too.

The truth is that his agitation ought not to be directed to the Leader of the Opposition. It ought to be directed to the Chairman of the NCC, it ought to be directed to the Cabinet of Barbados, it ought to be directed to people who can do something about it. I am simply lending my voice and providing advocacy.

Sir, I find it strange, as do other Barbadians, that the union we saw on the television and in the newspapers every two days, for the last two to three years, could preside over the largest amount of dismissals and reversions in any one year in Barbados and their voices remain silent in the face of all of this. As I said, I can only leave it to the fact that the Assistant General Secretary is too busy learning

Parliamentary procedure in the Senate and the President has not yet settled into his new job as Manager to be able to deal with these issues.

Sir, these matters are of great concern. As I said, these come against the back ground of a Government that promised duty-free cars, a Government when in Opposition, that promised that needs repetition, because the workers in Barbados, including the policemen have said that unless we repeat it, the Government seems to have forgotten the fact that they went to every police officer, they told the nurses and the teachers, fear not, you will be getting duty-free cars, and they told the public servants in this country that those who did not own houses before will get interest-free mortgages, and that cost of living will continue to be the primary concern.

Sir, in those circumstances, the workers of Barbados feel justified in complaining to us and to themselves on a weekly basis that they feel better must be done. We say, Sir, that we feel better could have been done. I agree with the Prime Minister that there should not be a sliding scale at the bottom, but I do feel there should have been a special cost of living allowance, such that the messenger who is really only getting an increase that is the equivalent to the price of a chicken per week, could be carrying home more money.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, if you work out the increase that the messenger or the janitor at the bottom is getting, it is the equivalent of the price of one whole chicken and that the increase that the pensioners are getting, Sir, cannot even buy a tin of pink salmon. It might buy one tin of corned beef but, certainly, not two, and certainly could not buy two tins of mackerel. Sir, at the same time, this Government could write off \$19 million in the last month.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what is a write-off? It is an agreement never to collect that money, that those who practise the sport of Kings, as horse racing is known to be, and who have had the benefit of being able to be the recipients of a lottery, should not have to pay the \$19 million owed to the Government of Barbados, a portion of which could be used to enhance what the pensioners and what the lower-ranking workers of the Public Service could have gotten by way of a separate cost of living allowance.

Sir, we do not say this because we want people to have to benefit from a cost of living allowance, but we recognise that the times in which we live have been difficult. We recognise that in the same way the Government believes or that the Government has finally come around in accepting the necessity for a fiscal stimulus package, the contents of which we are yet to see, because

we know what has been produced by the Social Partnership, on which the Prime Minister sought to defend his lack of leadership so much, by saying to listen to the Social Partnership.

Sir, a Government in Canada last week, refusing to engage the same thing, finds itself on the back foot and fighting for its life, because it would not advise the Canadians how it would lead them out of this crisis.

Do you want to criticise Barbadians for expecting leadership from you in this crisis? While there is a Social Partnership and while the Social Partnership must be utilised and respected, the Social Partnership cannot replace the leadership that the people of this country have vested in the Prime Minister on January 15. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that we expect better.

Two months later we hear on an ad hoc basis today, that the fiscal stimulus package for roads is \$30 million. He did not come to tell this House that today. We heard it as a fact along the way. We do know what is the level of the stimuli, but what we are saying to you, Sir, is that the Reverse Tax Credit, which we support, will not have an immediate impact, but a wage increase will have an immediate impact, that the Reverse Tax Credit does not become applicable until the year 2008 finishes. Then, when 2008 finishes, taxes are not filed until April 2009 and cheques are not returned until the second half of the year. Therefore, all of those people who would benefit from the Reverse Tax Credit will get help in nine months. But they want help now. The way to help them now, we suggest, is through forms of income support.

In the same way that after September 11, 2001, we did not promise the tourism sector tax incentives, we agreed to price support for the tourism sector, on condition that they did not lay off anybody, because we recognised that holding on to jobs is the most important thing in this economy.

5.00 p.m.

Sir, in case the Government is not recognising it or may not want to admit publicly, but there are a lot of people in this country, especially in the construction sector, who are frightened that when they go home for Christmas in the next week or two, that they are not going back to work in January. It is a serious issue.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, in spite of all the voices coming from way down, it does not alter the fact that employees at the major construction companies are frightened. Whether some of them would go back on or some of them would stay off remains to be seen.

Sir, what cannot be disputed is the sense of dread and fear in them. They too, like us, have heard that the Beach Lands Project, a US\$200 million project down in Sunset Crest, has been put on hold. They too, like us, have heard that the Regent Project right there where Chefette, Hometown, used to be, has been put on hold. They too have heard of the other tourism projects in St. James and Christ Church that have been put on hold.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, this is not something that we wish for this economy. Perhaps, if there was a little more hubris coming from the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, we could get to the job of expanding the roads a little quicker, such that some of those employees who are now employed by traditional construction companies, could be absorbed in an expanded road construction programme.

Mr. Speaker, all of us spend time on the ground out there. I had the honour of being with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West at a tournament in his Constituency on Sunday night and the reality is that the people who spend money for the most part in this economy that keep it ticking over - the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should know this too - are the people who work in construction. They are the ones who spend more money because they are the ones who have an attitude to life that they would always find it. They are masters of their own fate. They know how to build a house and they know how to do what they have to do.

Mr. Speaker, my fear is that in those circumstances, not enough is being said to give those people immediate hope that they can work, come January. Sir, when the Prime Minister comes, as he did last week from Miami, and tells the people spend. One man actually said it did not sound like spend, that it sounded like lick it out at Christmas time. There are people who are concerned. Everybody wants to buy a ham for Christmas. Everybody wants to buy a turkey for Christmas. Everybody wants a little extra to drink and eat and bake.

Sir, we can hide it behind the political divide as much as we want in here, but there is genuine fear on the part of thousands of Barbadians. I trust and hope that a word to the wise as a Government is sufficient. We need an urgent stimulus package in this country. We do not need a medium-term economic plan. However noble that may be, that is not what is urgently required. We need a package that would keep workers working and that would keep money spending.

Sir, when we said this in March when the Estimates came here, they cursed us and accused us of not wanting to see fiscal prudence. Mr. Speaker, we said to them then that

the clouds were on the horizon and when things start to retreat and the private sector starts to retreat, the only player on whom you could count is Government.

We saw it after the Great Depression. We are seeing it now in every western European country and in North America, where there is a recognition that only the Government can step in to expand the national income of the country or to preserve it for that matter. Sir, what you agree upon not only has to be clear, but has to be capable of implementation.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, as much as we would like to see a new hospital, the hospital cannot immediately help you now in terms of fiscal stimulus, because you have first to settle the plans and the architectural drawings for the new hospital. Mr. Speaker, there are other things which can help immediately and we need to get about it.

We will fight you in the trenches because at the end of the day we believe that the Barbados Labour Party would always be a better Government than you. We do not have to fight you on the backs of the suffering of Bajans, or on the backs of people losing their jobs because at the end of the day, this is one country, 166 square miles, and none of us would be insulated from the social fall-out or the crime.

Sir, last Friday in Waterford, in the Constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, he should be concerned. It is on my boundary, men having been paid two weeks' salaries were held up at gun point, one shot. Sir, every week now I am hearing stories of people having their wages taken from them on Thursdays and Fridays and they are going home with empty hands.

Sir, it is not a situation that we like. The Opposition pledges that in the absence of anything specific, we will put down our ideas. We were not invited to the consultation, but we would put down our ideas and share them with the Government, because the interest of Barbados is greater than the interest of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, those who want to sound as dismissive as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South did just now in an aside. I trust and hope that he would be in a position to ensure that there is an adequate safety net for the people of the Bayland and Brittons Hill when the jobs start going home next year.

Sir, you can delude yourself into anything. Sir, it takes two hands to clap, not one. Sir, I know that for us job No. 1 was jobs. Sir, when the Barbados public heard me talking about diesel all the time, it was because the

Honourable Member for St. Peter determined that job No. 1 was jobs.

Sir, if you go back and read Hansard and the 1994 Budget Debate which the Honourable Member for St. John delivered, you would find that when the Honourable Member for St. Peter responded, he said then that the energy cost in Barbados was too high, that the tax take from energy was too high, and that there had to be the use of energy to create jobs in this country and to create the economic framework upon which this economy could grow.

Sir, we went in as a government and the Prime Minister who then had responsibility for energy, reduced the taxes on energy products and for the first time, put an offset on diesel, such that gasoline did carry a higher price than diesel because we understood that you needed diesel to bake bread, to carry passengers in public service vehicles, to fish and to pump water.

We do not take any pride in seeing the Government do this, but when you have a policy that keeps the price of diesel higher than the price of gasoline in this economy, whatever else you may come in here and say or whatever else you may use in debate, the reality is that you are leading to a contraction of jobs in this economy, because you are making enterprises that are finding it difficult to be competitive and in the first place more uncompetitive and they would always find it difficult, simply because of our economies of scale. That is why the single market is so critical to us.

Mr. Speaker, I say, for heaven sake, let us now stop the political divide in this country in relation to this matter of the recovery, and stabilise this country. When we said that there should be a national stabilisation bond, was it because we recognise that there was surplus liquidity from the sale of RBTT shares and BS&T shares? Mr. Speaker, before that money either finds itself out of Barbados or in consumable items, let it go to help build the replacement school for the Louis Lynch Secondary and two more primary schools. Those are projects that are immediate and capable of immediate execution.

Sir, the forms of income support are critical, because as I said that tax cuts have a lag, but income support allows.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would leave this Parliament this evening really very sad, because there are one or two Honourable Members on That Side who do not seem to understand that while they may have made millions, the people in Haynesville have not. Sir, the people in

Haynesville are the ones who are going to have to face difficult circumstances.

There is an opportunity for us to laugh, but now is not the time and I say to you, Sir, if ever there was a time in the affairs of this nation that requires us to have a national approach to stabilise the country and to avert a crisis - which has not reached yet, but the crisis is pending - it is now. Sir, we will not stand on ceremony. We will make every Member of the economic team of the Barbados Labour Party available in the context of Social Partnership to assist this country. We will not stand on ceremony, because it goes beyond these 30 Honourable Members.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, when I heard the Prime Minister this evening, I became even more convinced, when he sought to rely on esoteric statistics, to try to sell a wage package that is below inflation. That wages package will not allow workers to buy next year what they could buy this year.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, how much ever the Prime Minister might want to couch it in semantics as being responsible, the reality is that next year workers will not be able to buy what they could buy this year, with this wage package today. Sir, I say to you, if there is but one thing that has me more concerned, it is the likely job losses that will flow. Sir, in that context, I regret and I call upon this Government to share the unemployment statistics to the country, as a matter of urgency. We need to know the situation we are in, if we are going to know what are the steps we must take to go forward.

Mr. Speaker, if already 3 000 jobs were lost in the first six months of the year and the unemployment statistics for the end of June is 8.6 per cent, if the third-quarter is traditionally the worst quarter of the year, then we need to know what is the state of unemployment at the end of October in this country.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is not private information. It is public information. We know it was completed since November 15, and therefore, ought to be made public, as soon as possible, thereafter. Today is the December 9, almost one month later.

Mr. Speaker, I have used this debate primarily to address the issue of wages, the need for it to keep apace with inflation. The fact that against the background of increased taxes, as opposed to increased disposable

income, it compounds the effectiveness of the inadequacy of this wage increase. The fact that we believe that separate from the wage increases, there are other terms and conditions that are critical to public servants in this country that ought to be satisfied. We believe that the natural expectation that public workers had for more, was fuelled by irrational promises which, mercifully, are being moderated from this climate.

Sir, the greater problem this country would face next year is not just the inadequacy of wages to meet the purchase of goods and services, but the possibility that the construction sector and other sectors that are dependent on the construction sector, more than 3 000 jobs could go again in the first three months of next year.

Those are the kinds of workers, who more than any one else spend money, and therefore, we need to settle on that kind of fiscal stimulus package makes sense. The report that has come from the Social Partnership, which the Prime Minister continues to trumpet, is, in fact, a medium-term economic plan. It is not a fiscal stimulus package. It would achieve nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that now is not the time to stand on ceremony. We could fight and beat you on other issues, but let us work together now, in the defence of Barbadians and Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, when one listens to the Leader of the Opposition, one would have gotten the impression that the first time in the history of Barbados or that for the first time since 1994 to this period, inflation was higher than salary increases for the workers of Barbados. Sir, that is not true. When one looks at the statistics, one would recognise that in 2001 to 2002, inflation was higher than the increases given to the unions. Sir, during that period to which the Honourable Member was prompting as the highest level of increases that were ever given, from 2006 to 2008, which was a 10 per cent increase, inflation was more than 10 per cent. Therefore, the Honourable Member could not have said she has forgotten. The Honourable Member would have known that inflation...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, I indicated that in the last wages settlement, that the inflation figure was offset by the cost of living allowance being triggered. Sir, once the cost of living went above 5 per cent, there was an automatic 2 per cent cost of living allowance.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point I was making. Sir, even with the 2

per cent cost of living allowance included, the cost of living was still higher than the increases.

Mr. Speaker, that is the last salary increase, but do you know what is also most interesting? Sir, we were told in this Honourable House that the past Government was operating on all cylinders and that there was growth during those periods. What is interesting is that at a time when the world's economy is in trouble, at a time where the financial market has crashed, at a time when every country in the world is laying off persons, where persons are even asking to give back part of their salaries to be able to continue working, we are here, not laying off persons, but giving persons an increase which is higher than what was given by the Barbados Labour Party during their tenure.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Barbados Labour Party to tell this Honourable House, between 1994 and now, when they would have given a salary increase that was higher than what this Democratic Labour Party is now giving.

Sir, we are in a crisis and we are giving wage increases that are much higher than what the Barbados Labour Party gave. Sir, we were hearing about how well the economy was doing, but we were in what was called a wages restraint.

Sir, even though there is a crisis in the world, the Democratic Labour Party has demonstrated our faith in the workers of Barbados. Sir, this is something we have always said. We have always said that the workers and investors are the key persons in this economy. Sir, we have demonstrated that today by bringing these increases to the workers of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, how much more could you ask of a Government, when the whole world is in a crisis, when the whole world is asking for wages restraint, when we are hearing about workers agreeing to give back parts of their salaries to help their companies? Sir, in Barbados we are doing the reverse. Sir, when one listens to the Leader of the Opposition, one gets the impression that we are not doing well on behalf of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we are being told by the Opposition that our revenues have dropped because of the offshore business. We were told how much money was raked in by the offshore business and that because of the financial crisis, our revenues have dropped. Sir, we did not come to this Honourable House and said this would happen and therefore, we could not give increases in salary. We came to this Honourable House and said that we understand that in order to protect the economy of Barbados, we must have faith in the workers of Barbados. Sir, that is why we are here today.

Mr. Speaker, what is most disgraceful is that for a Government that came to this Parliament and argued over renewable energy, a Government that had the gall to call it a "Green" Budget, is that after bringing that terminology to Parliament, that Government came to this Honourable House and every minute they were arguing about and supporting fossil fuels and supporting outsiders, while not putting an argument for Solar Dynamics and Sunpower, who are pushing green economy for Barbados.

5.20 p.m.

Sir, one would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have said that we now have a golden opportunity to push renewable energy instead of asking us to borrow money from overseas to prop up fossil fuel. Sir, one would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would be agreeing with us in here and pushing renewable energy because it is localised.

Mr. Speaker, I am shocked, because one would not believe that the Leader of the Opposition would be asking us to borrow money to buy fuel and not borrow money to get a new sea port, when we are told by the players in tourism that we need to have another sea port, because we are going to need that for the larger ships that are coming.

Sir, I am arguing that if I were to put my support behind borrowing money, I would prefer to borrow money to build a new sea port instead of borrowing money to encourage persons to have fossil fuel. Sir, again, if I were to borrow money, it would be to support all of those indigenous players in developing renewable energy than to support the Arabs and otherwise but, Sir, this is the name of the game.

Mr. Speaker, one point has to be made in this House. It is okay to talk about high inflation, but one fundamental point must be accepted, that when you have high inflation, you create opportunity for your local manufacturers, your farmers and your tourism players.

Sir, people have to understand that there is something positive about inflation because, at least, it creates a market for your producers. When prices are low, your producers cannot compete, but when prices are high, you open a window of opportunity for your producers.

Sir, I cannot understand why we believe, especially the Barbados Labour Party, that they must continue to push a foreign propaganda machinery to promote outsiders instead of promoting their local producers. We saw it, when the Barbados Labour Party for the last 14 years, used every piece of gross to export jobs away from Barbados and send them overseas by encouraging people to move towards machinery instead of supporting the call by unions to support workers. Sir, now they have the gall to come in

here and behave as if they have helped the plight of workers in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in here and I beg them, beseeched them and did everything possible to recognise that in any equation, the workers had to be included. Sir, I remember speaking about the isosceles triangle and I remember making the point that the isosceles triangle turns into a straight line because the private sector and Government came together and squeezed out the workers of Barbados. Sir, you can check the records of Barbados and you will see that I was able to make this point.

I do not believe that there is no need to talk about CTUSAB or "Sell-out-Sab" because this Government has demonstrated that they understand the plight of the workers and instead of asking for wage restraint, they are coming with the highest increase since the early 1990s, at the time when the Opposition is telling us that the economy is on the decline.

Sir, they had the economy when it was in growth and they cut back and they hid the money. Mr. Speaker, you would not believe that they were able to take an economy, where the revenue was \$1 billion and they took it as high as \$2.7 billion, but the workers of Barbados never shared in that. Sir, now that it is declining, they are asking us now to do all sorts of things, but we have recognised one thing. If we want to turn around this economy, we have to have faith in the workers and the investors in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it was the Barbados Labour Party that introduced the accrual accounting system and they should have known that under the accrual accounting system there is something called 'bad debts.'

Sir, once you have a provision for bad debts, you have a provision for write-offs. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party created the climate and what is even more interesting, even before that system was introduced, nobody would believe that the Barbados Labour Party wrote off debts for the Turf Club. They had no provision to write it off, but they wrote it, but now it is legalised, they are complaining. Sir, you cannot please the Barbados Labour Party, because when they are in Government, they do one thing, but when they are out of Government, they expect you to do something different.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the statistics do not prove them to be correct on this issue. Sir, we have to understand that this is a small economy...

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I want to give the Prime Minister one piece of advice. We have heard enough to point out that even though we are enjoying good

oil prices, that there is a possibility that they could be reversed. I am saying to the Prime Minister that instead of dropping all the time, in the interest of the Barbadian public, it might be better if he develops a reserve fund, so that when the prices increase again, there would be something to cushion the impact on the manufacturing sector, instead of having the decreases coming in one direction, then the increase and you have nothing to cushion it.

Do not accept the advice from the Barbados Labour Party because they cannot advise anybody on this particular issue. They ran up the debt at the oil company and left it for us to pay and we had no buffer. What we are suggesting to you, Sir, is to take the public in your faith, speak to the public and tell them that we will protect them in the future.

Mr. Speaker, we also have to understand that we have potential in the renewable energy sector, especially in solar energy. Sir, do not be worried and do not allow oil prices to stop the Government from going forward with its renewable energy policy, because the renewal energy policy is a home-grown policy and it redounds to the benefits of masses of people in this country, but the fossil fuel policy takes away from the masses of people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, on top of this, we are not only giving the civil servants 10.5 per cent increase. We are also giving them a Reverse Tax Credit along with free bus fares for their children.

Sir, as it stands now, we have educated the civil servants and we have locked them into an eight-hour system and depriving them from using their ability, because the rules say that once you work in the Civil Service, you should not have another job.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the Government cannot pay the civil servants all the money they would like but they must create the window of opportunity for them so that they could do their normal eight-hour job and then use their ability to help others to create work.

Sir, all we are doing is limiting the ability of our people and we must find systems in this country to free up our people.

5.30 p.m.

We sometimes in this country sit down in this Parliament and pass a lot of foolishness, not under your stewardship and no reflection to the Chair.

Sir, I am saying that a man is prevented from retiring at the age of 60 and has to work until 70, you are preventing that gentleman from using his experience to

help someone else. I have always argued against it, and will continue to argue against it. We have to understand that people who work in the Civil Service have gained experience and must have the ability to use it to help others.

Sir, strange enough, we understood it with the returning nationals working somewhere else, but we do not understand it with our own people in our country. It gives the lie to how we think about our own. That is why when I said on the Floor of this House that, it was all about money, as it relates to returning nationals, nobody can convince me that I was wrong.

This Government must have a new policy because, as I said already in this Honourable House, we have to find innovative ways to get foreign exchange. We have studied and we understand how to get innovative ways without a foreign exchange cost to the country. Similarly, we must create an innovative way to find work for our senior civil servants, encourage them to retire early, set up their own businesses and employ some people in this country using their experience.

Sir, for too long we have been using the system of peeping into other people's plate, and that concept of jealousy must stop. We must promote the concept of expansion that allows people to use their ability and encourage them to employ others instead of limiting people from growing. We believe that stagnation is what is needed in this country. I say, you are wrong. What we need in this country, is an opportunity for people to expand and bring along people.

Sir, for too long we have stifled our people in this country. I am seeing an opportunity for the masses of this country to have an opportunity, once more, to open up and create opportunities, not only for themselves, but for the rest of the people in this country. Sir, I am saying, this is only step I.

Sir, do you know what is also interesting? In 2001 and 2002, in this Parliament, I heard a Minister talked about contraction and how we must cut back and implement wage restraint. Faced with a different situation, we are hearing about a stimulus package to help expand the economy.

We are not negative thinkers. We are positive people who understand what we need to do. We can get here and criticise this Government as much as we like, one thing I will tell you. I just had the opportunity to hear other leaders speak of copying the style that we have adopted in Barbados.

Sir, everybody knows that when it comes to me, there is nothing called negativity. I believe that anytime

you are in a crisis, you fight your way out of a crisis. You do not sit back and moan. You get up and be aggressive and proactive.

What I have seen in the last 14 years, every time there is a crisis, everybody is ducking under a desk, telling people about wage restraint and tightening their belt. That language is not known to the Democratic Labour Party. We will tell you to get up and help us to bring the economy back in action. Neither will we tell people to go on to the world market and borrow money to buy oil. We will tell you to go on the world market and borrow money to build another seaport or a hotel.

Sir, when one listens to the Opposition one gets the impression that the Opposition is happy, because they believe that certain projects should be cut back in this country. When we were in Opposition we would have been telling the investors that they have to come and invest now and we would demonstrate how they could, but now with the Barbados Labour Party, the negativity steps in, and they are happy that the investors are not investing. They do not realise that when they do that, they are not impacting on the Democratic Labour Party, but they are impacting on the same poor people that they claim they want to help.

Sir, I say tonight to those investors who have projects, this is time to get those projects up and going now, because you have the workers in your favour and the demands are not as great as previously.

Sir, one of the things I would say to this country is, if I had to build a house a couple years ago when construction was high, I would have had to hold back because the cost would be against me, but now that it is the other way, this is the time I would step in the market, because the wages demand would not be as great, and the opportunities would be greater and be in my favour. Again, you would not all understand that.

Sir, I am saying that the time for investing in Barbados is now, so that you can expand and by the time things turn around, you would have your project in place at the right cost and be ready to take the opportunities that are there for Barbados. I do not expect the Other Side to understand that because we are speaking business.

Sir, we also have to understand that Government takes its revenue from the masses in Barbados, and it is all right for us to continue to say that Government must do this and Government must do that, but people have to understand that any enlightened Government, will ensure it puts policies in place to move persons from the Public Service to the Private Sector. That is, once Government creates the opportunity, it allows persons in the Public Sector to see that there is an opportunity for them to gravitate to the Private Sector.

Sir, over the last few years, you saw everybody at the lower end of the economy looking for an opportunity to move to Government. Those of us who understand economics, would know that once that occurs you are creating a debt trap for the Government. Once Government over-spends, it has to find the money, either through taxation, borrowings or some other way, which we will not discuss here today. I will say a bone is ripe is a good call, but it cannot be for oil. It has to be for productive investment. Buying more oil cannot be productive investment, but if you are spending money on renewable energy, that is productive investment.

Sir, if the Honourable Member said to this Government they should go and spend money drilling for oil, I can understand that, but not telling the Government to go and borrow money to give it back to the people who they are borrowing from. If the Honourable Member made the point that this is a good opportunity for our farmers to grow more food because inflation is high, so that the food cost in Barbados is competitive, I can understand that call, but what we are seeing is the reverse.

Sir, I have great confidence in the Honourable Member for St. James North. I know that this speech will not be lost on him, because as one of his students, he would be proud to recognise that his student has come a long way and should be endorsed.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Actually, you taught me Scripture.

Sir, we are seeing today that in the year 2008 to 2010, the Government of Barbados is giving a 10.5 per cent increase, the closest to that was 10 per cent given last year by the Government, when they claimed that growth was in the economy and everything was well, but this Government decided that it could not retard the growth of the workers in Barbados, and it understood its campaign commitment to the workers. That is, to increase the disposable income of the workers in Barbados.

Sir, we are talking as though we are operating in a world by ourselves and what is going on in the world would not affect us. We have to recognise, and I have said it before in this Honourable House and will repeat it again. It is one thing to write a Manifesto but it is another thing to be faced with the reality of life. When we came and recognised that they had squandered all the money on the Elections, they are very quick to say yoo yoo yoo.

5.40 p.m.

Mr. President, they are very quick to say Whao! Whao! Whao! When one looks at the revenue levels of this

country, one would have recognised that between 1994 and 2004, this Government has been able to increase revenue.

Sir, do you know what was interesting? In 2003, the year of the Election, when they recognised that the Democratic Labour Party was putting pressure on them, the revenues of this country fell, but only in that Election year. Sir, there is a pattern to that Government.

Sir, I could look at the Estimates and tell you that every year before an Election year, the revenue expenditure increases under this Government. Sir, do not believe that the crisis that is creating in Barbados is by accident. It is created by political decisions made by the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, those political decisions do not take the civil servants into account. They do everything to take all sorts of other people into account, but the Democratic Labour Party, in less than a year after winning an election, has given the greatest increase since 1994 to the civil servants of Barbados. Sir, this country should be grateful that we have recognised that workers too, make this economy.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, I did not want to break your stride earlier, especially in the absence of objection, or point of order, but you did use the term that we get in here and pass a lot of foolishness. I think that remark should be withdrawn because it brings this august Chamber into disrepute.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I did say that was not a reflection on you, this House or on the Chair. I made it very clear, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. We are well aware of that. You did say so, but I think that in order to protect the good name and the reputation of this Honourable House, those remarks should not be made in relation to Parliament. I therefore ask that they be withdrawn.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, you are ruling, but be careful, because you would also have to protect the wiping of a speech from the House too.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I have always held a private view that when it comes to the negotiation of salaries and wages in Barbados, too often it happens that long past the event, negotiations commence.

In other words, I am saying that if for example...

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading

the House by giving the impression that this Government delayed the negotiation with wages. The truth is that this Government had to call on the unions to come and negotiate and come for some money.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, what I was actually saying, is that almost right across the board in Barbados, we have seen a culture evolve where a given month of a given year, is the time at which salaries and wages should be increased, but where for various reasons, excuses or justifications, we see it happen too often that negotiations start after the event, meaning that there have been situations, where one would get, not just the impression, but experience the reality that negotiations are commencing sometimes six months after salaries were due to be revised, seven months after, a year after, and things like that.

One negative result of this type of thing, Mr. Speaker, is that there can be a tendency if the workers get impatient for their representatives to be under pressure, to rush negotiations, when negotiations are already laid.

I have had that view, and I would like to urge the country, including the private sector, that if they know negotiations are supposed to end on February 28, in whatever year, that before February 28, of that year, the negotiations start and continue, so as to give all parties an opportunity to think things through carefully, without necessarily having to rush at the last minute. I say so in circumstances where it has happened in the culture of this country, that this type of thing has had this effect.

One year after salaries were settled and legislated, it so transpired that the Government of the day was not able to pay retroactive pay, all in one lump sum, and workers had to take their retroactive pay in installments. This has happened in the Annals of Industrial Relations in this country.

Mr. Speaker, in all this, I must make mention of the fact that some years ago, before 1990, the Democratic Labour Party undertook a regrading exercise, and that was severely criticised by the Barbados Labour Party. Years after, the Barbados Labour Party undertook a regrading exercise and that was severely criticised by the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, as a Barbadian in love with this country, let me say that there could still be anomalies, notwithstanding the fact that we have had regrading exercises, there could still be anomalies. There are instances where there are persons who bear responsibility of a high level, who are lower down the scale than people in other Departments and do not have equivalent responsibility.

I have known of situations in Barbados where people who are effectively heads of departments were paid at S7, as Heads of Departments, while Deputy Permanent Secretaries in other Departments were paid as S3. In fact, in one case in my experience, there were two Deputy Permanent Secretaries serving in different departments and paid differently.

I would want to urge the Parliament to seek out anomalies and also, as they do so, be mindful of something called relativities to which I will turn to, at the end of my contribution.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, Ambassador for Particular Affairs, gave the impression that the Democratic Labour Party was giving higher increases than ever before. All right, if you accept that the Democratic Labour Party was giving higher than ever before, the question must be this: In 11 months could the Democratic Labour Party have so developed the economy, especially inflows of revenue, as to be able to make such handsome payments, or there had to be something about the economy before January 15, which would have provided the foundation for this financing?

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that they have not made the point that the economy is not well and it is worse off now, than when they left. The argument I am making, Sir, is that even if it is worse off, we are still giving better increases than they gave, when they had a better economy.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thanks for the clarification.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: I believe it was a point of elucidation.

The problem is that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is not being criticised by me for what he just said. What I was saying that much in his glee and enthusiasm, he submitted that these increases are the highest in a long time, or the highest ever.

5.50 p.m.

I am suggesting, in contrast to what he is saying, that the economy prior to January 15, would have had to have strong elements about it that would allow it now, in the absence of a spectacular inflow of revenue, to be able to pay these increases. I just thought I would respond to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy on that one.

Sir, in favour of the argument that there ought to be a sliding scale, which I believe was rejected by the representative of the majority of public servants. Picture inflation taking route in this country and picture the

position of the messenger, of the maid, of the general worker, of the receptionist, of the clerktypist, of postmen, of cleaners and artisans in Government. Cannot they make out a case based on the argument of the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados?

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member knows that the way to correct that problem is through the Reverse Tax Credit, that is why it was introduced.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: I am suggesting, Sir, that if you have an inflationary atmosphere in the economy, then what you do is to identify those elements in the community at greatest risk and try to find formulae by which they receive comfort, what Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford used to call the mitigating effect.

I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that a 10.2 per cent increase across the board, much as it has become the norm in recent years, does not necessarily favour those at the bottom. I have identified the messenger, the maid and the general worker among others. Perhaps a case can be made out for these people to be specially treated beyond the Reverse Tax Credit, because if a Permanent Secretary working for \$8 000 or \$9 000 gets a 10 per cent increase and a maid working for substantially less, gets a 10 per cent increase, they both get a percentage increase which is 10 per cent, but in real terms 10 per cent of \$8 000 at the top is a greater reward for that employee than for a person receiving 10 per cent at the bottom. Mr. Speaker, one of the regrets we have on This Side is that inflation should have been taken into account in terms of its worst effects on the working poor.

Mr. Speaker, I was a little bit surprised that my former student, the Honourable Member and Ambassador from St. Lucy, could actually say that inflation could be a good thing. The Honourable Member said that inflation could be a good thing because producers would respond by producing more.

Mr. Speaker, what he has to realise is that under the Laws of demand and supply in a perfect world, where you hold a whole hosts of factors constant that suppliers would want to supply at high prices, but that buyers and consumers would want cheaper prices.

Sir, if what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is telling us is true, then he has not really taken full regard of the persons who are consumers, who are hardest hit by inflation, nor has he taken into account the fact that in an inflationary spiral, the cost of raw materials and factor inputs to the producers would so affect the producer as to

act as powerful dis-incentives for the producers to really produce.

I just thought I would correct the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. I will give way to him, but I am speaking the truth.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member knows quite well that whenever you get import substitution, what you do is save jobs or create jobs, which allows disposable income to remain in the hands of the workers. Sir, you could have low prices, no jobs and nobody to buy the goods.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, import substitution used to be one of the planks on which many economists built careers 30 and 40 years ago. Sir, when you consider this, you have to bear in mind that there are effective limits to how much an open economy can produce and bear and then, of course, you have to look also at the question of the effect overall of what is being done.

In addition to the fact that what the Honourable Member is saying would favour producers more than consumers, in an open economy where technology, raw materials and such like, have to be imported, there is a strong tendency then for inflation to have its worst effect. That is why I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East that in the absence of a cost of living allowance, which is not unknown to this Parliament nor this country, we on This Side have grave reservations. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy also said that public officers ought not to be banned from working in a second or third job. There is no strict rule that a public servant is forbidden from working in a second or a third job.

However, such a public servant has to get permission, and such a public servant can work so long as there is no conflict of interest, and so long as his normal work in the Public Service is not compromised, but it is not unknown that public officers have sought permission successfully to work extra jobs in order to be able to supplement their income. Is this not an admission that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is making that things are so tight that one job cannot satisfy you and you must therefore look elsewhere for financial comfort?

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that we should look at this question of relativities. The Public Service represents a uniquely positioned institution in this country. I respect and admire almost every public servant I know. They are for the most part very professional and very forward-looking. A lot of them avail themselves of opportunities for training

and such like. Mr. Speaker, the Public Service also sometimes has its own language and its own anachronisms.

Mr. Speaker, I want to bring something to Parliament that I have only just discovered. There is in this country a post called Vault Attendant at Land and Surveys. What I would want to know from Government is the specific job description of a Vault Attendant, to which other job does this show relativity, whether it is an established or unestablished job and what avenues there are for Vault Attendants to receive training, either from the Training Division or from an institution which is an approved institution for purposes of training. Apparently, the grouse I am hearing on the street comes from the fact that the Vault Attendant is not semi-skilled or unskilled but is paid at the level of a labourer or as a so-called general worker.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude now by making mention of a situation that ought to be ventilated. I come now to the political class. It must be a source of some concern that the political class of Barbados representing Both Sides, is a class of whom much is expected.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Honourable Member for St. John and other Honourable Members are persons who are known to interact heavily with other people and they would have been doing so even when they were in Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting that - and this is one where nobody knows what is the relativity between a political functionary and a normal worker or an executive worker - they must have encountered situations where they were under as much stress as the Minister, when it came to representing people.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in this country which has a culture of personalised service by politicians, much is expected of them, and politicians, Ministers, Prime Ministers and Back Benchers are not paid properly.

Mr. Speaker, Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford once voted with the Barbados Labour Party, when they were voting increases, in a situation when the Democratic Labour Party, at the time, did not think that the increases were justified.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make mention of this. Many a Minister would find that he or she is supervising a Chief Executive Officer in his or her Ministry, and that Chief Executive Officer would be working for more money than that Minister.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, we cannot go on living in fear. The only reason we permit persons, who are subordinate to us, to work for more than us, is that we are scared that if we are seen to be working for too much, then we would not be part of the crowd, we are not one of the boys. Sir, every person who has been a representative and a Minister together knows the pressure on politicians. He knows the sleepless nights, the number of telephone calls that come at 1:00 a.m., yet there are persons in this country who are working for twice as much as Ministers, who do not have one-tenth the responsibility that Ministers have.

Sir, the time has clearly now come that even though there has been this convention, that at the time when civil servants salaries are raised, that Parliamentarians and politicians be given something of an increase, reflecting somewhat the salary increases of civil servants. The time has come clearly when somebody has to take the bull by the horn and be strong enough to pay Parliamentarians properly. A properly-paid Parliamentarian is likely not to be tempted. In the annals of political history of this country, there must have been politicians who literally had to live by their wits, and I say nothing more.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, we have to look at our role. Sir, sometimes we are our worst enemies. Sir, once upon a time, somebody was appointed to review the role of politicians and to make recommendations as to remunerations. This person came to the conclusion that politicians worked once a week, on Tuesday only, and that they should be paid for attendance. Sir, wonder of wonders.

Within the last three years, I have heard on a call-in programme that politicians only function on Tuesdays. This was uttered by somebody who clearly should have known better. Sir, there are politicians and there are politicians, and the more affable and gregarious a politician is, the more pressure there is on that politician because that politician is deemed approachable and carries sometimes a disproportionate weight.

Mr. Speaker, if politician "Y" does not have a listed number and lives far away from the people, then if politician "A" could be found, you could bet that people would go to politician "A". Sir, that has been the experience of the Honourable Members for St. Lucy, St. Philip North, St. John, and all Honourable Members on This Side.

Sir, I am not speaking necessarily selectively. I spoke as particular individuals came to my mind. I spoke

without prejudice to say that others are not in a dissimilar position.

Mr. Speaker, you must know that the political class is one that deserves more respect than its due. You must know too that there is nothing like holding more than one position simultaneously in politics. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North is a Minister. He is a legislator. He has to read old Law to see if it wants reviewing. He has to read new Law to see if it wants introducing. He has responsibility to his Constituency.

Sir, the Honourable Member is a regular fellow who went to school, a perfect example of a fellow who applies himself and got through, and he would tell you, like so many of us, how many sleepless nights he has had, and the portfolio he holds is one that no normal person would want to hold. That portfolio is one where in excess of 25 000 persons are after you, when it comes to housing.

Mr. Speaker, when you are Minister of Welfare, another 30 000 persons could be coming after you. When people want jobs, they could be coming after you. Sir, some of these persons who want jobs have squandered their opportunities while in school. I know of bright persons who have wasted their time, who did not do well at school, but who still expect to be rescued by the political class. I am not saying that in any snobbish way. There are persons with great abilities in Barbados, who are on the streets as "parros". These persons had been told by their teachers to make use of their education and they did not do so. Sir, a lot of these people now expect to be rescued by the political class, or to be put into Government jobs.

Sir, what happens is that very often when the opportunity comes to rescue these persons, they let you down. On the other hand, there are those in Barbados who unfortunately develop the view that if they were to go to politician "B" and ask for a job and do not get that job, then politician "B" would have maliciously withheld that job from them.

Sir, jobs do not abound to the extent - certainly not in Government - that people think. Sir, self-employment is the way to go for many people. Therefore, we are going to have to have the courage to talk to Barbadians, to take them into our confidence and tell them how the world is going.

Mr. Speaker, currently the Public Service of Barbados is brimming and overflowing, and the time is now at hand where, for the future, employment will have to be generated in the private sector.

Sir, while talking about the private sector and about who want to work in Government badly, the truth is - and this is a good reflection on Both Sides - a number of years ago, I checked and compared the level of wages and

salaries in the private sector, against that in the public sector.

Sir, increasingly, Government has been a better employer in relation to the payment of salaries. Mr. Speaker, it is only at the very high levels in the private sector that they make politicians look as though they are earning scratch grain or chicken feed.

Mr. Speaker, with those few observations, I am obliged. I have sought to speak my mind and have done so.

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

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying how much I enjoyed the speech of the Honourable Member for St. James North, and may be I could ask the Clerk to ensure there is another chair at the back, given his independence of thought. Sir, I endorse much of what I heard from the Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my presentation by sharing with you the background to which we operate in this global economy.

In the United States of America, we know it has been in recession for more than a year. Indeed, the last statistics I saw would suggest that up to one million jobs have been lost so far this year. We know what has happened in terms of Chrysler, Ford Motors and General Motors, where these car companies are asking for a bailout of billions of dollars to help them to save thousands of jobs.

Recently I saw a report which would suggest that Sony Corporation was laying off 8 000 workers worldwide. This corporation does business in Barbados, and I know at least one entity which does significant business with Sony. Therefore, it will impact upon us, one way or the other. Sir, we saw shares in City Group plunging to about 10 per cent of its original worth. I believe it was worth about \$225 billion and I believe that City Group is now valued about \$125 billion.

6.10 p.m.

We saw what happened in the United States of America to Bear Stearns, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Sir, we read about it and on CNN, we see it every night.

Mr. Speaker, in the United Kingdom, the forecast is that they should lose about two million by the end of this year and probably up to three million by the end of 2009. Sir, Germany, the largest economy in Europe, is in recession.

Sir, closer to home, Jamaica, like us, has challenges and I heard a few days ago, on the radio programme that St. Lucia has challenges. Indeed, their tourism industry, which is their number one foreign exchange earner, like ours, has significant challenges.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has acknowledged that it has issues both in the financial services sector and in the tourism sector and, indeed, I believe Government has paid a kind of incentive to the workers, recognising the challenge they have in terms of the number of days they were employed in the tourism sector.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada has its challenges and we know how important Canada is to Barbados and Japan is also in recession. Sir, worldwide, except for may be China, who has not yet come out and said to the world whether or not it is in recession, we can see that globally, we are in recession. Sir, Barbados does not exist in isolation. Sir, much to the disbelief of the Opposition, Barbados does not operate in a vacuum.

Mr. Speaker, how do we pay wages? We pay wages through taxation - direct and indirect taxation - and Sir, you would permit me to look at the areas that enable us to derive our taxation. Sir, in tourism, the forecast is that even with the best effort, we should be down in the tourism sector by 10 per cent next year through no fault of ours. Sir, hopefully, the cruise tourism sector would take up some of the slack.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, we have a situation where the United Kingdom, our largest market, is in recession and Canada, which is a significant market to us in recession. In fact, I believe that the United Kingdom introduced a tax recently, which actually increased the cost of tickets in the United Kingdom depending on the length of the journey you are taking, so that the cost of tickets travelling to the Caribbean as a whole is scheduled to increase and I believe will be increased more, over time.

Mr. Speaker, in the international business sector there will be challenges and, Sir, Canada which is our largest market, is in recession and the prognosis is that it will have an impact upon us. Sir, I believe already from what I have heard that one bank in Barbados is closing its doors, not a domestic bank, an international bank, because of the impact of global recession.

Mr. Speaker, we have challenges in the international business sector, but again, all is not lost in that market and I will come back to that.

Mr. Speaker, in agriculture, I believe that we could use this as an opportunity, like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy intimated, for farmers to grow more because with the pressure internationally, there should be more

opportunities for them to grow food locally and make a better standard of living through growing locally. In this regard, I believe that the Minister of Agriculture, who has been very active in his Ministry, is doing all he could to encourage more of our young people and more of our farmers to recognise the opportunities in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, in construction, we know that lots of our major construction has come from foreign investment. Of course, Government has already said it would take the opportunity to initiate some local projects so that the construction industry, which is scheduled to contract, we would abate that by ourselves in ensuring that a couple of large projects would be done over the short-term to medium-term.

Sir, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about a litany of projects which has nothing to do with Government and which has everything to do with the international environment, whether or not they are taking off at this point in time.

Sir, it has nothing to do with our initiatives or lack thereof, but we have recognised that and the Government will take some measures to ensure that the young men that the Leader of the Opposition is so concerned about, or seemingly so, that they will, in fact, continue to work in this economy, because we accept the importance of the construction industry to Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of energy, I would like to echo the comments again of my colleague from St. Lucy, because I do not believe that the price of oil will continue to go down. Already you have heard during the last OPEC meeting, certain countries saying that the realistic price of a barrel of oil is US\$75. I believe, within my heart, that a barrel of oil will steadily rise in the immediate future.

I believe that the pragmatic approach, like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said, should be considered by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, that is, we consider having some kind of fund, not to pass on all the savings now, recognising that the price of oil will go back up to US\$75 or thereabout, if the producers have their way.

Mr. Speaker, manufacturing has been declining for some time. Again, what I would like to see is that the manufacturing sector takes the opportunity to retool and find somewhere to mass produce their products so that they could, once again, export their products into CARICOM and beyond.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, on a point of elucidation. I have not said that was tardy nor have I been saying that it is Government's fault that negotiations were late. I said there is a culture for years in Barbados, both in

the private sector and the public sector and, generally speaking, negotiations start too late.

6.20 p.m.

Sir, all I am saying is, it bears, noting that it is Government who took the initiative to make contact with the Trade Union Movement saying it is time for us to sit down and negotiate salaries on behalf of the public servants.

Sir, the National Union of Public Workers, I believe, was the first union to make its submissions to Government in early August 2008. I believe that their proposal was for 15 per cent and the NUPW represents 70 or 75 per cent of the public servants in this country.

I have heard certain Barbados Labour Party commentators criticising the NUPW not only for reaching a settlement, which I believe is reasonable, not only a settlement which is the highest since 1990, but reaching a settlement, according to them, too quickly. That is the kind of nonsense you have been hearing, not in here. That is the kind of nonsense you have been hearing by commentators, no doubt linked to the Other Side, that, in fact, it is a bad agreement because it was reached too quickly.

Sir, whilst on that note, the President of the NUPW cannot defend himself in this Chamber, so I will take the opportunity as his Member of Parliament to defend him. I heard the Leader of the Opposition suggests that he was too busy doing other things to make proper representation on behalf of the workers in this country.

The President of the NUPW does not negotiate salaries for the NUPW by himself. He does not, Sir, in that regard. I have no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition, because the Honourable Member likes to grand-stand, will find some time one on one to apologise to the President of the NUPW, because he deserves an apology.

Asides.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, I have this saying, which is not an original saying, "To whom much is given, much is expected". I have to say that on a personal level I am usually disappointed with the Head of CTUSAB, who has been given much by that other in particular. So that when I see the calls, the unreasonable calls for 20 per cent at the bottom.

I am not saying that there are not workers in this country who deserve an increase of 20 per cent, because I believe that within the Barbados Workers' Union there are opportunities for them to represent many workers in this country who now need representation, who need more than 20 per cent. I would urge them to look at the gas attendants,

many maids in the private sector and many workers in construction. There are many opportunities for them to assist people in this country.

Sir, I believe we spent about \$40 million recently on salary regrading and part of the rationale was that we needed to ensure we still maintained some differentiation between the salaries at the top and the salaries at the bottom. I believe that in terms of the ratio, 6.3 per cent to 1, and CTUSAB's approach would, in fact, mean that all the gains that we made after our \$40 million would become redundant.

I do not believe that Government had a choice, but to accept and work with the union, who represents the largest number of public servants in this country. I cannot understand how Government can be expected to have a different agreement with a union, who represents 20 or 25 per cent of the public servants.

Sir, given the world economy, given our challenges for the next 12 months, or may be even 24 months, most reasonable Barbadians, most people who really have the interest of Barbados at heart, would accept that an increase over the next two years of 10.5 per cent is fair, reasonable and equitable, and would enable Barbados to continue on its path of development with the other measures that this Government intends to take.

Sir, in this regard, it is with ease that I want to support these measures and recommend them to Honourable Members of this House.

I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I join this debate to make a few brief points on this measure before the House. I, perhaps, need to say at the onset, that having heard the contribution from the Other Side and the sentiments so much in favour of the worker, and ensuring that workers receive their just due, it reminds me that it is perhaps one of the few times that I have heard in such fervent cries, words coming from the Opposition in defence of the rights of the workers and the need of the worker for just compensation. It is heartening, certainly, to hear that there is concern from the Other Side, that workers ought to be justly paid.

Sir, there are a number of truisms that have emerged so far in this debate which I believe to be underscored. I wonder, in view of these truisms, why I sense a mood of anxiety and perhaps a mood of disquiet coming from the Other Side.

In view of the context in which these wage increases, in my view, ought to be seen, I wonder why there is not a reach across the divide by the Opposition in joining with the Government in ensuring that we have a responsible approach to wage increases in Barbados at this time.

There are a number of points that have been made very eloquently by the Honourable Prime Minister, which in my view, correctly set the tone to this debate. He made the point, and I believe this point had been made in the past by the Honourable Members of the Opposition. For example, leading up to 1991, the Government was spending close to 55 per cent of the current revenue on salaries. I believe that one of the things that the Opposition often rely on is the question of the extent to which we will grow our expenditure on salaries to the point that it becomes unsustainable and get to the point of threatening our whole fiscal prudence in relation to our expenditure. We have heard in the past how this mad rush of not linking expenditure in relation to salary increases to productivity and the danger that can be in relation to our fiscal situation.

Sir, that is why I am perhaps a bit astounded, because the common thread going through the presentation that I heard from the Honourable Prime Minister is, while, for example, in these negotiations, the Government has sought to get to the point of ensuring that public officers can receive reasonable wages for their effort, but it should be done in a way that does not impact negatively on our fiscal position, and that the ratio, which exists in relation to the debt ratio as a percentage of GDP, is not exacerbated.

6.30 p.m.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that these are all sound principles. Therefore, it amazes me why I would sense a bit of disquiet from the Opposition Benches, and I have listened very carefully to them. Certainly, I have heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about the need to maintain the purchasing power of the worker. Then, the Honourable Member juxtaposed that to the need, in her view, for an urgent stimulus package in Barbados.

Indeed, my view of it is that I sensed there is a mood on the Opposition Benches and I, perhaps, would like to warn about the projection towards these job losses. I often heard, coming from the Other Side over the past couple of months, that we have to be careful about job losses and there is almost a prediction that there will be job losses in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, my caution is that rather than look at what is happening in Barbados and the economic challenges, rather than to identify the opportunities that exist for further economic growth, and rather than set the mood in Barbados by which Barbadians understand that we have planned our economic strategy, taking into account,

not only what is happening within Barbados, but certainly what is happening globally, and point to the positives, I am hearing far too many negatives coming from the Benches of the Opposition.

I certainly wish to agree with what I have heard coming from the Prime Minister today, which is that rather than talking and sending mixed signals to the business community in Barbados, perhaps we need to restrain, tighten and do a lot of things like that, we should be focussing on productivity.

Mr. Speaker, we should be focussing to ensure that we can have an approach and perhaps a national approach that embraces productivity, and we can rekindle whatever issues, as they relate to confidence in our economy, to ensure that while we are hearing of all the things that are happening in the United States of America's economy, that we bring back and ensure that within Barbados, we can move forward, based on a level of confidence, in how we plan our further economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we understand the global economic crisis, because it is in that context that we have to respond. We need to respond and we need to set the tone, even in relation to this debate, on public sector wages, because it is from this debate that the trend will re-echo in the private sector.

The private sector, we have always known, must be re-engineered and re-tooled towards ensuring that we can rapidly expand our foreign exchange earning capacity in Barbados. Sir, if we send the wrong signals to the private sector, both as it relates to these negotiations and in terms of the wider issue of productivity, then I believe as Parliamentarians, we would not be doing our job.

I certainly want to caution the Other Side about sending mixed signals. Yes, there are issues, because I really do not believe that these are new issues we are facing. I want to identify with the need for prudence in our economic planning and to stress the point - I want to go back to some statistics based on the Barbados Labour Party's own publications - because I do not know whether on the one hand, when they are in office, they speak the jargon, they speak about the need to relate the wages' expenditure to GDP, the need to control public debt, fiscal prudence and all that kind of stuff. We hear of all these things and we cannot do this because of this and that.

Sir, now that this Democratic Labour Party has formed the Government, it appears to me that these standards of good economic prudence have been thrown through the window, and they are no longer relevant, in relation to the issues that confront us today.

I beg, Mr. Speaker, to have the right to agree with the direction which the Honourable Prime Minister has embarked on, in relation to a more innovative approach to financial management and doing it in a way that protects the bottom line, and protects the vulnerable, but does not surrender our confidence in ourselves as a people to ride whatever economic waves of challenges that confront us. Mr. Speaker, I would rather proceed on that basis, than on the basis of the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, in these debates, I always point at least to two documents produced by the Barbados Labour Party when it comes to financial and fiscal prudence. This is why I doubt their words, when they speak of these things. Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to two of their Manifestos.

The first Manifesto for the agenda 2003 to 2008, raises an admission, in relation to their management of the economy. In the Manifesto of 2003 on page 5, they promised that they would institute policies to contain our overall fiscal deficits to no more than 2.5 per cent of GDP, the overall public debt to no more than 60 per cent of GDP. This was their promise in relation to the fiscal management. Of course, we heard from This Side what we came and found, and the massive debt that has been incurred by the Barbados Labour Party that has created some of the present situations that we have to deal with, in Barbados today.

Mr. Speaker, I come to their 2008 Manifesto on the same issue of control of public debt and their concept of responsible debt management in Barbados. One would have thought that between 2003 and 2008, they would have gotten it right, in relation to their promise to ensure that the overall public debt does not rise above the figure of 60 per cent. This is what they say, Mr. Speaker, in their 2008 Manifesto on page 9.

As a result of extensive investment in public services, our domestic debt has risen and the overall level of domestic and external debt is 85 per cent of GDP. As I said, this is not an unsustainable level, but we are not satisfied. A Barbados Labour Party Government will bring total debt to GDP down to 60 per cent as soon as practical.

Sir, this was a promise that was made in 2003, so this issue of having an eye on ensuring that our public debt because if we grow our wages' expenditure faster than our ability to produce in Barbados, we will be courting those same disasters of the past.

6.40 p.m.

Sir, that is why I want to salute the prudence which has obviously informed the negotiators in relation to these salary increases, because at the end of the day these salary increases and how we approach them, or how we have

approached them, have consequences for the fiscal position of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to a few other points which have been made, but which I believe need to be emphasised. Mr. Speaker, although we have kept our eye on our debt situation and on fiscal prudence, we have been able to have a settlement position of 10.5 per cent, the highest level ever agreed to by any Government of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, it is a settlement that brought fairness to the workers of Barbados and that will not do any damage to the economy of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I believe that Barbadians listening to this debate and understanding the global economic situation in which Barbados finds itself will more embrace that explanation than listening to the kind of alarmist positions being put by the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, Barbadians recognise that we are living in a situation in which we need to have people fully deployed, but to do that we have to practice prudence and we have to spread the pie. Mr. Speaker, they recognise very well that this Government has committed itself to doing just that and in approaching these negotiations have done it from a reasonable perspective.

Mr. Speaker, the other point which I need to underscore is that these negotiations and the figure of 10.5 per cent have met a number of prudential standards already. Sir, not only has that position been embraced by the Central Bank of Barbados, but Standard and Poor's, which is usually the overall benchmark used by the Barbados Labour Party, has indicated that these levels of increase will not imperil the finances of Barbados and they have labelled them responsible.

Mr. Speaker, we have met that test and we have underscored the importance of negotiating salary increases, that not only achieved fairness, but that does not jeopardise the financial and fiscal position of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty in embracing the Resolution before the House. I believe that we need to get on with the job of ensuring that Barbados can become more productive and that Barbadian employees can see the bigger picture of being a part of the economic development of Barbados by which we will ensure that we will utilise a strategy that our economy can grow and can actually grow in relation to all of the sectors of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we need to focus at this yuletide season in ensuring that Barbadians are working and that they are working for a fair wage.

Mr. Speaker, while I know that the focus in this debate is on the public sector, I am also concerned that we have not focussed enough on what is happening in certain

sections of the private sector, where Barbadian workers are earning less than what is considered a decent minimum wage. We have workers across the various ambits of our economy in the private sector that continue to earn wages that are less than acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I call tonight on the unions, particularly those who have the responsibility of negotiations in the private sector of Barbados, to ensure that they use the same vigilance and the same gusto that they have approached these negotiations with the Government in relation to those very vulnerable areas in the private sector. Mr. Speaker, I believe if that is so it will have a significant impact in relation to the Government's programme of aiding and assisting those vulnerable workers in our economy.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I have no hesitation at all in embracing the measure before the House in relation to these increases for public sector employees.

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Resolution before us relating to the increase in salaries for public sector workers in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, let me at the outset state that, outside of the debate in this House and the kind of tone which was brought to the debate by the Other Side, I have not heard public sector workers quarrelling with the leadership of the National Union of Public Workers' or with their chief negotiators on this matter.

In fact, in the absence of a quarrel, one could well accept that the public workers of Barbados are in fact satisfied with this negotiated salary increase of 6.6 per cent in 2008-2009 and 4.5 per cent for 2009-2010. Therefore, it is a mark of responsibility, not only on the part of those who negotiated with Government, but a sense of responsibility being exhibited by all of the public sector workers of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I think that within this country that sometimes we under-estimate the commitments of the public sector workers to Barbados and to the economy of Barbados. Sir, when our public sector workers look across the world as many, if not all of them do, they see the meltdown in the financial sectors and the economies in the world. They recognise that they must assist in the economy of Barbados by raising their own level of productivity and by accepting a very good salary increase as negotiated by the National Union of Public Workers.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned as an individual who led a major trade union in Barbados, the Barbados Union of Teachers, that not all of the trade unions came on board

relative to this matter, but we have not had it in the last 14 or 15 years, or prior to that.

Mr. Speaker, I am a bit bothered because I see the Trade Union Movement as a unified entity made up of a collective of trade unions. I know that united we stand, divided we can fall. If there is one thing I would encourage trade unions to do is to sit across the table, as others do, and without trampling on each other's corns, or seeking to usurp each other's authority, to recognise that where there is a commonality of purpose, there must be a commonality of voice, and that voice must be heard throughout such things as salary negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, I would not want, nevertheless, to take from the National Union of Public Workers, their right to negotiate on behalf of those they represent. You cannot take that away. No amalgam of trade unions can usurp that right. Therefore, what we are here debating today is an agreement which was reached after negotiation.

6.50 p.m.

Sir, nobody has dragged the National Union of Public Workers to the table and told them to accept this, or that they would disband the National Union of Public Workers. There were no coercive tendencies placed on any trade union in this country. Within our democracy, persons sit down as gentlemen and women and negotiate on behalf of those they represent. Therefore, we arrived at this particular matter today from a sensible approach to those negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, I know there has always been the talk of a prorated salary increases. Sir, the point has been already made by the Prime Minister that the last time there was a proration of salary increases, the difference between S1, the top of the scale, and the bottom, was 1 percentage point. Therefore, you would get an almost infinitesimal proration over those 38 or 40 points in the Public Service salary scale.

Mr. Speaker, one cannot argue that those unions that were part of the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados and were engaged in the negotiations, would have stuck to their particular vantage point of 20 per cent at the bottom, and 10 per cent at the top, over two years. It is always a negotiation strategy.

One has not heard the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados saying that the National Union of Public Workers was wrong for accepting on behalf of their workers a 6 per cent in the first year and a 4.5 per cent in the second, because that is not the "done" thing. That should not be encouraged among trade union brothers and sisters within the Barbados labour management relations.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing here today, after several months, Sir, I know it is unfortunate that submissions were only made in August, 2008. We have always tried in the past of trying, as early as possible, by April of the given year, to submit our proposals for negotiations, so that workers could get their increases as quickly as possible. Notwithstanding that, when I listened to the airwaves and the comments from the National Union of Public Workers that there was a desire, a willingness not to go through the “monkey business”. Sir, this was the first, real, sensible negotiation that has taken place in this country for a long time.

It was not a foolish negotiation of adjusting a 1 per cent here and coming back later. Sir, it was about knowing the reality of what exists in the wider world, where sensible men and women sat down across the negotiation table and said: “Look, this is what we will accept.” Sir, that was accepted by the Government and by the National Union of Public Workers.

I have not heard rank-and-file teachers quarrelling that they would not accept it, that they would leave it in the Treasury or in the bank, that they would not utilise it for their benefit. What we are hearing persons saying is that they would take that increase and use it for their benefit. Sir, as workers, they deserve the increase and they will use that increase for their individual benefit. Therefore, let us not become side-tracked.

Let us not believe that for some reason workers believe that politicians on the Other Side would suddenly speak on their behalf. They have never done it, so why would they do it now? In fact, they are the ones who truncated negotiations on many times. They are the ones who said take it or nothing else. They are the ones who had no respect for the various unions. In fact, today one saw that disrespect.

Mr. Speaker, there is a view, and it came very strongly from the Other Side, that if you are in our system, the National Union of Public Workers, or the Barbados Union of Teachers, where you are an employee of the State, but you are leader of that trade union, you should not seek promotion. That is absolutely wrong and should not be encouraged.

The members of your union have recognised and have given you an opportunity to lead them within the structures of these various trade unions. Therefore, you cannot expect that because persons have the ability, potential and qualifications, because they are representing their colleagues that their colleagues must keep going past them, while they represent them.

Sir, that makes no sense whatsoever. Therefore, it was unfortunate that the Honourable Member for St. Philip

South spoke to that matter and I believe the comments coming from the Leader of the Opposition, relative to the President of the National Union of Public Workers, were extremely unfortunate. It says to other public sector employees who might have the talent, the ability, the know-how to lead that particular union, to shy away from the leadership because in this Honourable House, somebody from That Side would get up and say they were too busy looking after their own promotional details than representing the interest of their workers.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, that is unfortunate, but on That Side they will know of that history because going back to the mid-1970s - I was a youngster then, still in school, but I paid attention to what was happening in this country - there was that history where 200 per cent was asked for and people were brought on the streets and fingers were pointed in the face of the esteemed leader, who is now departed.

Sir, we now have a more reasonable and sensible leadership at the National Union of Public Workers, and so we do not have that kind of behaviour. That leadership does not become involved in political excesses, in order to prove a political point, and not on behalf of the workers whom they represent. There is now a more sensible and proactive leadership within the National Union of Public Workers.

Sir, sometimes you have to lead and sometimes you have to guide. You just cannot allow everybody to be directing you, but you were placed there because of faith, commitment and trust, and you would have demonstrated that. Therefore, the leadership of the National Union of Public Workers have no reason to hold their heads down today, but they could feel proud that they have represented their workers well, and that in the month of December the workers will get their raise of pay in their packets. Sir, that is what is important.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I believe that every worker deserves his or her just reward and that he or she has to know, within his or her own conscience, if he or she is working for the reward he or she is being given. Therefore, let us not get into the hairy-fairy and scary notion.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point as well that for all of us in this Honourable House and outside in the wider Barbadian space, among all workers, both the private sector and the public sector, that Barbados must be the most important aspect of anything we do. If it is in working and producing, if it is in salary negotiations and salary

settlement, Barbados must always be kept as the focal point of whatever we do.

Sir, it makes no sense in demanding that which the economy cannot sustain, then for the economy to collapse, then for people to suffer even worse in the circumstances that presently prevail in this world. Therefore, there has been a most sensible position taken by negotiators on behalf of Government and the National Union of Public Workers relative to this particular settlement.

Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, have no problem in supporting the Resolutions before this Honourable House for 6 per cent salary increase in the first year, and a 4.5 per cent salary increase in the second year.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Resolution before this Honourable Chamber. Sir, at the beginning, I would respond to the points made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, when she, as she agreed, sensationalised the whole issue of this stimulus programme that she called for. I know that the Honourable Member was not in the House last time we met but it was clear then and throughout the last 10 or 11 months of this Democratic Labour Party Government being in office that we are serious about stimulating the economy.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the current Resolution, which we are debating here this evening, constitutes part of this stimulus programme, because when you look at the fact that by December pay day, this salary and wages increase will take effect, then you know that millions of dollars more will be in the pockets of the public servants and public officers to spend in the economy to ensure that the retail sector is buoyant, that staff is not laid off, that people will have a Happy Christmas and then in January, which is traditionally a lean month, we have the prospects of the back-pay being paid, stimulating the economy, increasing the disposable income and the amount of money in circulation within the economy to keep employed and to keep small businesses opened.

Mr. Speaker, we go further. The Government has placed on public record, the fact that we propose to construct one or even two Government office complexes, but not with the cost over-runs, or the controversy that surrounded the Barbados Labour Party's construction of the Warrens' Government complex. We are also going to be building schools, nursery and primary and rehabilitating

the Lodge School, my alma mater and Harrison's College, which I also attended.

Mr. Speaker, you are an old Lodge boy, like myself and I was shocked a few months ago, when I went up there and the main quadrangle at Lodge, which used to be well-maintained, in our times, in the 1970s and 1980s with the grey walls, those historic buildings, going back to the Codrington period, but when I went up there I saw the place in shambles. The grey walls are now black with mildew under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Sir, a top school in the island being ridiculed like that by the Barbados Labour Party Government, but we, the Democratic Labour Party Government, has pledged to rehabilitate Harrison's College and the Lodge School to the tune of millions of dollars and this Government is fast-tracking this expenditure to stimulate the economy and to keep construction workers that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East talks about, to keep them employed. Sir, we are not just talking. We have serious proposals to stimulate the economy.

Mr. Speaker, we will be building, as we heard last time we met and previously, we would be escalating the work at the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission to make sure that small contractors would be able to mobilise a team of artisans, be it carpenters, masons, electricians and plumbers to repair houses and to continue the pit toilet eradication programme. Sir, not like what occurred under the Barbados Labour Party Government where even in St. Michael North East we had a situation where we saw water-borne toilets and bath facilities being attached to rotten houses all in a crash programme to try to win the last Election. Sir, this is totally inappropriate and what the Democratic Labour Party would be doing is to try to make sure those houses that need comprehensive repair or rebuilding would be properly refurbished, so that it is not just a mere cosmetic issue.

Mr. Speaker, we go further. In the National Housing Corporation, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has been publicly going from St. Philip to other areas in the country, St. George, turning the sod and indicating that we are launching massive house construction, the provision of house lots and the construction of high-rise terrace units in areas such as Country Park Terrace, which was abandoned by the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Sir, we have identified Tweedside Road and at Mason Hall Street, we have identified a whole area that we are going to purchase and build high-rise terrace units for the people of the City and throughout Barbados. Sir, there will be construction to stimulate the economy and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is sensationalising and giving the impression that we are not

stimulating the economy but, Sir, nothing could be further from the truth.

The Democratic Labour Party is committed to stimulating the construction sector. We are stepping up to the plate. We heard neighbouring islands like Trinidad talking about tightening their belts, but we are doing the opposite and having a counter-cyclical approach to stimulate the economy so that you do not get a contraction of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, we go further. We have talked about the National Environment Enhancement Programme (NEAP), which put nearly 200 workers, previously unemployed, to work at the various depots of the Ministry of Transport and Works.

Sir, people who were previously on welfare, who were looking for work, abandoned by the Barbados Labour Party Government and the Democratic Labour Party Government has put them to work for the first time. Sir, these people from the City and all throughout Barbados are standing proud that they do not have to rely on the State for hand-outs, but that they can earn a decent living as an independent Barbadian worker. They are thanking the Democratic Labour Party Government for this wonderful initiative, again, putting more money in the hands of people in the island and putting millions of dollars to stimulate the economy.

Mr. Speaker, we go further. Sir, even within the private sector there are proposals for massive house construction, be it at Nesfield, St. Lucy; Frere Pilgrim, Christ Church, Coverley, Christ Church; Deane Town, St. James and other areas. Sir, the massive road works that MTW is proposing in St. John and St. Lucy...

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I attended the road works of the Crab Hill Police Station a few days ago and even the police officers sharing the event and who spoke at the event, alluded to the poor state of the roads in St. Lucy, under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party Government and the Minister of Transport and Works, the Member of Parliament for St. Lucy, and the Government of Barbados has pledged to embark on a massive road construction, a rehabilitation programme, a multi-million project to rehabilitate those roads in St. Lucy and St. John that were neglected by the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Sir, they punished the people of St. John and St. Lucy for supporting the Democratic Labour Party year after year but, Sir, relief is here and the Democratic Labour Party will ensure that justice prevails and that these roads in St. Lucy, St. John and throughout Barbados, will be

rehabilitated on a massive scale, again, putting construction workers to work and ensuring that the economy is stimulated. Sir, we could go on and on.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about this issue of compression, that is to say, as the Honourable Member for St. John mentioned that compared to the 1960s and 1970s when a Permanent Secretary would work for 15 or 10 times than the lowest paid Government worker would get, but now that ratio has gone to 6.3 or so to 1.

Sir, what has happened is that this has given rise to a situation in which there is a difficulty in attracting professionals and other qualified persons in the public sector because the salaries offered by the public sector are not comparable to those in the private sector. We know we need these technical skills to ensure that we have the efficient running of the country and the public sector, in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I am speaking about engineers, doctors, general practitioners, as well as specialists, land surveyors and accountants.

10 p.m.

We have senior accounting officers, who are managing the accounts of the public sector who may work their way up doing a wonderful job, but we are not able to attract the persons who are Certified Chartered Accountants, CGA, ACCA or Certified Public Accountants, because they can make several times more in the private sector, and we are losing out on those technical skills.

Sir, there is a shortage of Air Traffic Controllers, Economists, Nurses and Teachers. There is a chronic shortage of male teachers in the system, because I taught for over 10 years.

I remember when I was teaching at St. Giles' Primary School, the Head Teacher took the few male teachers on staff and noted that we would be role models for male students who were just seeing sometimes just a mother at home, and then at school 90 per cent of the staff female, so they have no role models. So there is a chronic shortage of male teachers in the system because many male graduates would not want to accept the low salaries offered in the Government Teaching Service when they could become professionals in the private sector making a lot more money.

Sir, it goes further. Generally there is a shortage of Mathematic teachers, male or female, Natural Science teachers, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Business Studies and so on. There is a shortage of draftsmen in the Legislative Drafting Section of the Honourable Attorney-

General's Chambers. I understand Town Planners, as the Honourable Member for St. John said, and Urban Planners and Policemen. All of these are key areas within the public sector and we have to make sure that their compensation is sufficiently attractive to really fill those vacancies quickly within the public sector.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James North talked about this issue, when he mentioned Vault Attendants. I know that Section, because when I was stationed at the Ministry of Social Care, located at the Warrens Complex, that Section, which he referred to, was on the Ground Floor, and I saw the Vault Attendants well dressed, very professional and interfacing with the public, yet being paid just a few cents more than the maid. What about the Clerical Officers and the Telephone Operators who have CXCs and even Associate Degrees, being paid a few cents more than the maid. Obviously, they would not be encouraged and motivated to improve their qualifications and may feel cheated. I am happy that the maids and general workers are well paid in Government.

I also join in the chorus echoed by Honourable Members who have spoken before me, to call upon the Opposition to support the call that we have made on This Side for the trade unions and the whole society to encourage the private sector to adequately compensate maids, shop assistants, security guards who have to work for 10 or 12 hours, 6 or 7 days a week just to make ends meet, because the wage is so low, cleaning firms, persons who work at gas stations, persons who work at fast food restaurants, who sometimes who do not even get a 40-hour work week, or the minimum number of hours they need to get a free meal.

When their shift ends after the public transportation system shuts down, they have to pay out of their meager earnings the taxi fare home, then their disposable income is minimal. These working-class people in our country are suffering and this Democratic Labour Party Government cares about these people.

Sir, we are not saying that we should be irresponsible and the Private Sector should have unreasonable wages that would cause their businesses to shut down, but if a company is making reasonable profits, there should be some sort of incentive for the staff to be properly motivated and to share in the benefits derived by the profits made by the company. We must be fair and just. We must not have civil unrest when people get hungry and feel that they have been cheated by the system.

Sir, in terms of the compensation for the Honourable Members of Parliament, the Honourable Member for St. James North alluded to this in a very frank discourse and I congratulate him for being man enough to mention this. Sir, when you look at the fact that many of us, say,

Ministers of Government, have to have over-sight and management responsibility for staff who may enjoy the services of a Government vehicle, for example, the Heads of certain Statutory bodies, the Director of Urban Development Commission and the General Manager of the National Housing Corporation, as part of their compensation contract, they are given a well-equipped Government vehicle, for example, the Governor of the Central Bank, even the Commissioner of Police, Judges and the Chief of Staff of the Barbados Defence Force.

These are simple and straightforward compensation packages. Yet the Ministers who supervise these persons do not enjoy those packages. Of course, the Honourable Attorney-General and the Honourable Prime Minister are accorded this to some extent. I am saying that we as a Government should not feel ashamed to expect this.

In other jurisdictions, in Jamaica and other countries, this is standard. Even the issue of security. The Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Attorney-General would have that sort of security. When the Cabinet as a whole meets, even at a social event, they have to have security in terms of the Special Branch and so on as a matter of national security.

Sir, when you look at the situation in the United States of America, Presidential Candidates, even before the Elections, the Secret Service would have provided security, because you are talking about the decision-makers in the country who, in the interest of national security, have to be protected.

In fact, when you look at this modern era of terrorism, terrorists look at soft targets. So if they see that apart from the Prime Minister and the Honourable Attorney-General, the rest of the Cabinet has no security on a daily basis, then we are considered soft targets, serious issues to be determined.

Members of the public are amazed that your humble servant, this Honourable Member as a Minister of the Crown, does not have access to a vehicle. They ask, where is your chauffeur? They look at my Personal Assistant and think that he is my body guard, because they expect that.

Sir, we read the newspapers and we have access to Multi Choice and the Internet, and know that these are standard security facilities offered around the world, so there is nothing to be ashamed off.

Sir, in terms of your personal security as a Government Minister, just last Friday, a week ago, this Honourable Member's schedule was such, that I had to attend six events from the morning and my last event was in Speightstown, and I got home after midnight. Sir, I am saying that for a Government Minister to be driving a

vehicle all hours of the night, you can end up falling asleep at the wheel.

Sir, university lecturers have fallen asleep at the wheel, losing their teeth and hurting their chests and so on. These are serious issues. The former Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford had an accident on one occasion. These are serious issues that we as people must address frankly.

It is not about being extravagant, but it is to ensure that national security prevails and that personal safety and security of the Government and indeed the Senior Members of Parliament are, in fact, properly addressed. In fact, the former Speaker would have had access, I understand, to a Government vehicle.

Sir, I definitely look forward to these Resolutions and to a Happy Christmas enjoyed by the Public Service as they benefit from this very comprehensive package offered by this Democratic Labour Party Government.

I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, it is quite an interesting debate that we have entered into today. Through the discourse, may be I would try to make things clear the best way I know how. Let us start at a position that this gouging Government has taken to cause the workers of this country to bear the brunt of the hard and difficult inflationary times which we are seeing.

7.20 p.m.

A lot of it has its genesis in the first Budget, delivered by the Honourable Member for St. John to add to the inflationary problems that were existing at the time. Sir, instead of bringing a budget to counteract the inflation that we were experiencing, he brought a Budget that added to inflation.

What has happened since? Sir, after seeing inflation rise in this country to 8 per cent - when was inflation last at 8 per cent? According to the retail price index here, it has never been at 8 per cent - now at a time when inflation is at its highest ever...

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I am very reluctant to interrupt the Honourable Member, but we must be accurate in this debate. What statistical source is the Honourable Member using to say that inflation is currently at 8 per cent? What is the source of that statistic? Let us start there, Sir, and we would see

the extent to which the Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I am using the words of the Honourable Member for St. John. Sir, in his presentation, he said that the Central Bank is projecting an 8 per cent inflation rate in 2008.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Sir, you see, that is why you should not give a boy a man's job to do. I am not referring to the Honourable Member, but I am saying the Central Bank projected that, but I said it is unlikely that will be the rate, because of a moderation in price increases, in respect of oil products and in respect of commodity prices.

Sir, if the Honourable Member is going to ask when last is the 8 per cent, I have to ask: When was it 8 per cent? The Central Bank projected that, based on the trends at the beginning of the month. I do not know what 8 per cent the Honourable Member is quoting.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I was only quoting the Honourable Member for St. John, who said in his discourse, in his introduction to this Budget and this debate, that the Central Bank projects 8 per cent and I was quoting him. I find it more than passing strange that after quoting the Honourable Member, he now refutes the same statistics that he quoted.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. What I am refuting is the absurd attempt by a Member of this House to take the Yellow Book of the Central Bank, in which actual figures are given on inflation and read it to quote actual figures and compare them to what is a projection that I said is likely to occur. Sir, it is that kind of jejune behaviour that I have to question. I am saying we are more serious in here. We compare Actuals with Actuals.

Sir, what the Honourable Member is seeking to do, is because I said it is projected, but will not reach 8 per cent. When last was it 8 per cent? Sir, you said we cannot use the word "sophistry", so I am not going to use it. Sir, there is something wrong with that kind of analogy for serious people in a serious House of Assembly in the year 2008.

Mr. SPEAKER: The point is taken.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said the Central Bank projection for 2008 is 8 per cent. I did not get on to further talk about the moderation. Sir, even if we accept that there will be a moderation in the inflation rate, and it went from 8 per cent to 7 per cent, the

point is, Mr. Speaker, the wages' increase still does not reach the inflationary rate. What does that mean for the average worker?

There are about 30 000 civil servants that we have on our role. What does that mean for the 30 000 civil servants? Sir, that means that even though the prices of every single thing you buy in this country would have gone up approximately, some greater, some lesser, but approximately 7 per cent, your actual pay package has not gone up commensurate with the prices of every other thing that you buy in this country. This means that your wages will not be keeping pace with the cost of the prices. In effect, you will be getting a little bit poorer.

Sir, I go further. When the last wage increase was negotiated, there was a trigger mechanism put in place. Sir, that trigger mechanism was so important that in the newspaper edition, September 29, 2006...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, as you know, you are not allowed to read from the newspaper. I said, in my view, there could be no harm in referring to a given article, but you are not allowed to read from the newspaper, as you are attempting to do now.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I was not attempting to read from the newspaper, and I am surprised that you would suggest that. I was just relating to the article from my memory, because the union said, no retreat, no surrender, on the issue. I know other Members in here read from a newspaper and quoted from a newspaper, but I am not going to do that, but I go further.

Sir, not only was the union prepared to say, no return, no surrender, because they were adamant that a trigger mechanism should be in place, if inflation got above 5 per cent. Sir, that means the workers would be protected because they would get an additional 2 per cent on their wages.

Sir, what is more than passing strange, is that in this current situation, where we say inflation is between 7 per cent and 8 per cent this year, there is a good chance that it would be more than 7 per cent or 8 per cent or more next year. I am not saying that it will be, or there is a projection, but there is a possibility that it may be then. Why is it that a leading union in this country would agree to what would be possibly half of an increase of what the inflation might be the following year, Sir, 4.5 per cent and with no trigger mechanism in place?

Mr. Speaker, we are legislating this. This is legislation. This is not grounds for further negotiations later. This is a legislated wage increase, locking the Government and the Unions to accept 6.5 per cent in an atmosphere when it is 7 per cent or higher, and 4.5 per cent

when the atmosphere could be 8 per cent or 10 per cent. How do we know? But the possibility exists there, and that is why a trigger was put in place and agreed to by the union, so aggressively, that it was a no retreat, no surrender policy.

Sir, it was a no retreat, no surrender policy then, but why is it that it cannot be a no retreat, no surrender policy now, to put that safeguard in place for those 30 000 workers and their families?

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to suggest that it is a *qui pro quo* for any elevation to the other House. Sir, it is more than passing strange that a union representing thousands of people, who in a previous dispensation had a position of no retreat and no surrender, so that they could make sure that their workers were protected if inflation got above 5 per cent, not 6, 7, 8 or even higher per cent, but at this time when we are in a high inflationary atmosphere, do not agree to a similar trigger. I am surprised.

Mr. Speaker, page 7 of the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto - when I want something to laugh at, I often would read it - said that:

"Barbados can and should rest assured that a Democratic Labour Party Administration will do something tangible and meaningful about this vexing issue of the cost of living, because we are beholden to no one."

Mr. Speaker, if that is a lark, what is? Mr. Speaker, not only has the Democratic Labour Party Administration become the gouging Government of our time and has increased the cost of living for people across the length and breadth of this country, but further now it would appear - although I would never say so - we are now seeing exactly who they may be beholden to.

Mr. Speaker, I go further. Mr. Speaker, when we come to this Parliament, we come first and foremost to improve the lives of the people we represent. I would imagine that would be the prime motivating factor when we come and ask people to give us their support, so that we can represent their interest to the best of our ability. I have seen nowhere in this increase where the interest of the common man is being represented. I have not seen it, because if the people are not going to get an increase commensurate with inflation, then it means that they would continue to have problems making ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, when you add that to job losses; 400 and something to go home from LIME, they are now going to put people out to lime, because they are taking jobs away from them.

Mr. Speaker, the other day, I called directory enquiries and got St. Lucia and St. Lucia is directing me and do not know half the places in Barbados. That is what a company in Barbados has sought to do. They are seeking to put 450 people on the breadline.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only one corporation, there are corporations throughout this country that are just waiting until Christmas done to put people out on the breadline to cut back on their expenditure because they are seeing a reduced income in tourism. They are seeing that because the Pound is dropping. It is way low at \$298 and \$301, and it used to be \$341. That meant that people could afford to come to this country to spend money. What we are seeing now are bookings that people have made three and four months ago. They are saying that as they already paid they might as well come, but the travel agents are not seeing the new bookings in the numbers they would expect, because of the decrease of the Pound in the United Kingdom. Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Leader of the Opposition say that the full weight of the crisis has not hit yet. Mr. Speaker, woe betides when it hits, because we are seeing high inflation, a gouging Government, which is not caring for the people and is not prepared to take the bull by the horns and increase the people's salary commensurate with inflation in the first year and to add a clause that they could increase it, or at least keep it at a similar rate to inflation in the second year.

If they are not prepared to do that, what does that mean? That means again we are seeing the Democratic Labour Party of old. We are seeing a Democratic Labour Party prepared to let the workers of this country bear the brunt of all of the economic ills that this country is having to face. That is the Democratic Labour Party of old.

Mr. Speaker, I thought that when I saw new people like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, and my good friend the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, that we would have seen a new Democratic Labour Party and a new way of doing things, but that is not what we are seeing. We are not seeing a new Democratic Labour Party. We are seeing the same Democratic Labour Party repackaged. The Honourable Member for St. John has a habit of saying "old soup warmed up." That is what he has made. That is the Administration that is now following him - old soup warmed up. They are letting the people bear the brunt and not taking the bold initiatives and leading the country forward like a strong leader. The Social Partnership has to tell us what to do.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Partnership has to be aware and then when the Social Partnership comes, then we would say what to do. The people of this country are not paying the Social Partnership to take the hard decisions. They are paying the Honourable Member for St. John to do that, so why is the Honourable Member for St. John afraid

to do it? He should stop jet setting and jet skiing and get out there and work for the people of this country.

We have not seen the reduction in VAT on electricity. That would put a little bit more in people's hands. The Democratic Labour Party Administration said that in the first 100 days, they would remove VAT from building materials from houses below \$400 000. What happened to that? How many days has it been? Has it been 100? Has it been 200? Has it been 300 days, tripled what they set their own target to? Mr. Speaker, I assume that it is going to triple the reduction, because it has tripled the amount of time. Three hundred days have passed and we are still to see the reduction from VAT from building materials for houses.

Mr. Speaker, that would be a good thing because that would stimulate some construction in the country I would imagine, not like what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy came here and suggested that he would take advantage of the artisans in this country to drive down the wages that he would be prepared to pay them. That is what he said. He said that in this time...

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I have never made such a suggestion, so I would expect that in his sober moment he would correct himself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I might not be able to quote him word for word, but I am going to try to get the essence of it. The Honourable Member said that a few years ago he may not have considered building a house but now in these hard economic times, he would consider building a house because the wages aspect would be reduced, which means that he would drive down the cost.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I have never in my speech said anything about hard economic times. If the Honourable Member wants to quote me, he must quote me correctly.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: The point is made, Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Member is suggesting that because of the difficulties in employment in construction, that he would seek to benefit by causing the artisans to take lower wages for their services. That is the point that he tried to drive across to this country.

7.40 p.m.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member cannot tell anybody what I am trying to say.

Mr. SPEAKER: But the Honourable Member is entitled to interpret what you sought to say. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I was most shocked and appalled to hear the Honourable Member for St. Lucy taking that kind of line, to suggest that he would profiteer and benefit in these hard times by causing artisans and those workers in the construction industry to work for less, so that he could make a bigger profit. What an unconscionable man could the Honourable Member be? Those people have families who still have to eat. They still have to buy chickens which now cost more.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by giving the impression that I was making the point that the workers should reduce their wages. Sir, the point I was making is that instead of workers not getting work, it would be better for investors to continue to invest in Barbados, even though the attractiveness of the employment sector might not have been as aggressive as has been previously.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is confused and “cafoffled”. The Honourable Member has mis-spoke and is now trying to re-track it, but he cannot. Sir, we now understand why the Honourable Member for St. John could not put the Honourable Member for St. Lucy in his Cabinet.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy has now made it pellucidly clear to this country. Not only is he “cofoffled” and confused, but he is unconscionable and would want to profiteer. He would want to tell masons not to lay a block for \$1.20, but to take \$1.00 or \$0.90 instead. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy would not think about that mason, who has to spend a little bit more money in Moon Town for the sardines, corned beef or mackerel, and instead of knowing they have to pay more because of inflation, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is telling them to take less, while he knows they still have to pay more for their food, gas, register their car, pay land tax, so that he could make a bigger profit in a house before he sells it.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is a Honourable Member who is so vocal. Sir, day after day, the Honourable Member comes here, but he is now silent because he knows what I am saying is perfectly true. Sir, the people of St. Lucy should never forget what he said because in the same way how the Honourable Member for

St. Lucy has shown to this country that he is prepared to profiteer on the backs of the poor people of this country, what would he not do to his Constituency?

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House, and he has repeated that statement on more than one occasion. The Honourable Member is suggesting to this Honourable House that I am profiteering off the backs of poor people. Sir, that must not go into the record, because there is no evidence to show that. Sir, I would not do that. I would do the opposite.

Sir, the important thing is that I am ensuring that those projects remain in Barbados and that those people would not stop employing Barbadians. Sir, the Honourable Member is asking investors to leave and not invest in those projects.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I know that you cannot hear asides, but I just heard the Deputy Prime Minister saying that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be Minister of ‘Mackerel.’ Sir, I am very surprised at that. Why should the Deputy Prime Minister say that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be Minister of ‘Mackerel?’ Sir, may be it is because of the amount that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy sells in Moon Town. I do not know, neither do I understand why the Honourable Member should look down on another Honourable Member in that way.

Mr. SPEAKER: Of course, you know had I heard him, I would not have allowed it.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South came to this Honourable House and talked about undressing a man, about how he was seen in his nakedness, but we have now seen the Honourable Member in his naked state, when another Honourable Member could be suggesting that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be Minister of ‘Mackerel’ because he deserves nothing more.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is obviously misleading this Honourable House. I did not say, neither did I suggest that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should be appointed Minister of ‘Mackerel’. The proposal was really intended for the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, who I think best suits that position, especially since his ambition to become a Cabinet Minister in the previous regime was thwarted after his supporters had given up their

jobs, in the hope of working with him at the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is not a point of order. Let us proceed, Honourable Members.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to these kinds of debates about the wages for the people in this country and for the ability for them to make ends meet, I become very emotional. Sir, I become very emotional because I grew up in a shop in Deighton Road, and I saw sometimes the difficulties that people had in those days to make ends meet. Sir, it was the great motivator for me to come to the Parliament of this land and to make a difference, even in some small way, in the lives of those persons.

Sir, it hurts me when I see people, instead of trying to find creative and new ways to help those people to make ends meet, they reduce it to politics. It is sad.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition saying that she would leave this debate today being sad and I would have to join her in that remark. Sir, instead of trying to find ways to help the poor and the vulnerable, those who cannot do any better for themselves, those people who look up to us because they have great and high expectations of us. Therefore, for us to shirk our responsibility in the face of these difficult times, is appalling and sad.

Mr. Speaker, I find it hard sometimes when Honourable Members try to make a mockery of what is the reality of the situation in this country. Therefore, we need them to get more in touch with the reality of the vulnerable persons in this country.

7.50 p.m.

We need them to get more in touch with how hard things have become since January 15, for the people in this country. Once they can get in touch and feel the pain that the simple and ordinary people in this country is feeling, then may be this country would have hope for a better and improved Barbados.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, I rise in this debate to support the Resolution for the increase in salaries to civil servants.

Sir, one of the things I believe is important for us to recognise when we are debating motions of such a nature, is that we bear a special responsibility. Sir, in that respect, recognising that Barbados is going through a period in world affairs, where there is great uncertainty, and the fact that in the more developed countries thousands of people are losing their jobs. As a matter of fact, it has been calculated to date that one million people so far have lost their jobs in the United States of America. Sir, that does not include the fact that people in Europe are going through similar difficulty. Sir, therefore, it is unbelievable that Honourable Members on the Other Side, taking into consideration these facts, could seek to debate the motion to increase salaries in the manner they have been doing it.

Mr. Speaker, what we have noticed to date from the Other Side, is a careful attempt to adopt what I would call scare tactics, to indulge at a time in comic relief and this does not to me suggest that we appreciate the gravity of the situation that we face as a people. Sir, not only that, but it does not suggest to me that we appreciate the challenge as Barbadians, that this country faces in grappling the difficult situation of this time.

Mr. Speaker, we speak about this particular Bill as if it only refers to 30 000 people. Sir, it does not refer to only 30 000 people, because the Barbados labour force does not only comprise of civil servants. What I think is that the manner in which the Prime Minister has approached this, suggests to me a level of courage, a level of discipline and a level of thought in terms of ensuring that we do not engage in reckless actions that would compromise the future of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the facts, we begin to appreciate what has happened. Sir, in eight years, we had a situation where the average increase that has been granted amounts to about 3.4 per cent. Sir, for the first time, you have a situation in two years where the average increase being given to civil servants amounts to 5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, does this suggest that this is a government who is not cognisant of the facts, taking into consideration what has been given to civil servants in the past and recognising the difficult situation that is being faced now? We need to up it a bit more, but the Other Side does not give the Government credit.

Mr. Speaker, not only that. I want us to also look at the facts. Sir, as has been stated before, we are not only looking at 30 000 people, but we are dealing with an entire working population. When you look at the private sector in this country, you have a situation in the private sector where we have people in this country still being paid \$150 a week. Sir, do you know those people who are being paid \$150 weekly still buy goods and services? In buying those goods and services, they contribute from their hard earned money to paying civil servants salaries. Sir, in that kind of

environment, we have the Opposition saying that we are not doing enough.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Opposition should carefully contemplate their words and understand that, in a sense, they are asking the Government to exact an even further toll on the people who are not being defended by the unions at this time. We have a whole cadre of people in this country who are not being spoken for and we have the Opposition parading in Parliament, indulging in comic relief and, in some cases, acting. Sir, I am sure that some of them will get Grammy Awards as a result of what is happening at the expense of people.

Mr. Speaker, when we come here, we are supposed to represent people and not only partially, but all the way. Sir, that is why we must operate the balance when we come here and speak. Sir, what we had over the last 14 years is the creation of two Barbadoses. What happened over the last 14 years is that we were able to cleverly drive a wedge between the working class and we can see the same approach by the Opposition in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, instead of siding with the Government, recognising the difficult circumstances that are being faced right now, they continue the charade to try to convince people, the working-class especially, that they are operating in their own interest and, Sir, that is clearly not the case.

Mr. Speaker, we need in this country to take a careful look, not only at the wages of civil servants, because again, I would like to applaud the Government on the position that has been taken, but we also need to ask persons operating in the private sector to take a leaf out of what the Government has said.

The fact of the matter is that as a result of the action that we have undertaken, it would mean that instead of losing jobs, we are trying as a result of this to maintain current jobs within Barbados. We are trying to bring greater confidence to civil servants.

Sir, not only that, but we also have to recognise that the Government needs to set an example in terms of the private sector and where they need to go. Sir, unfortunately, as far as that is concerned, again, we are not being complimented for it. I really think that, in this situation, we need to compliment them for the fact they have taken this decision.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish on this point. Sir, generally, I think the balanced approach to wage increases has been started by the Democratic Labour Party because, in a sense, it also appreciates the need to ensure that it is able not only to get the best talent, but to retain them within the Public Service.

8.00 p.m.

In that regard, we recognise in a sense that they are trying to ensure a certain relationship is maintained and a balanced one between those at the top level of the Civil Service and at the bottom level. In that regard, we have to compliment the Prime Minister in his effort. I am only pleading with the Opposition to treat the issue responsibly while supporting the Government with what they are trying to do at this most difficult time in our country.

Thank you very much, Sir.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I had no intention of speaking in this debate, but after hearing the Honourable Member for St. Michael North Central, I had to speak. I have to speak, because I asked myself the question: After this debate, would the workers in this country be better off? All Honourable Members in this Parliament must ask themselves the question: After we have given the 6 per cent increase this year and the 4.5 per cent increase next year, would the workers - the maids, the servants, general workers and clerical officers be better off at Christmas time? Would they be in a better position than they were in 2007?

Mr. Speaker, I must say to this Honourable House that we are all Members of this society who live in Barbados knowing that there are times when persons go to the supermarket to collect basic food stuff, but many times they have to return the food stuff after they have reached the cashier. This is a fact of life.

Sir, I had an experience walking behind an old lady in a supermarket, in my Constituency. When we got to the cashier, the lady could not find the \$75 to pay for some groceries totalling just \$90. I had to help, and many times we had to help. Sir, the reality is, people are suffering in this country.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is impossible that \$75 could pay for \$90 worth in goods.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I made the point that the poor lady could not find the \$90. She had only \$75.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, we recognise the reality of the situation that food prices have increased. I agreed with the Government, some time ago, that the need to control

the prices in this country is very important. It is more important now than it was two years or 14 years ago. We recognise in this country that prices of everything have increased, building materials and medical supplies. All of these things have increased. It is important for the Government to control these things.

I made the point earlier this year that if Government had not increased road taxes, taxes on liquor licences and all those things in the last Budget, there would have been no need to come here and even increase wages. I believe that if Government had held taxes in this country at the level of 2007, there would be no need to do all of these things.

I am saying that the 6 per cent here, tonight, will not be enough to pay for the increases the Government is taking in this year's Budget. If Government can promise the people of this country to reverse themselves by not taking the taxes that we call nuisance taxes, then the people will be better off. The Government would have to be able to control the price of food. Government must control prices in this country in order to reverse their decision.

The Honourable Prime Minister made the point that some of these taxes will be very hard to collect. Therefore, I am calling on the Government that if they want to give the civil servants the 6 per cent increase this year, do not take the road tax of \$1 000. Those persons who pay \$1 000 to drive on these roads cannot afford it, and many of you know what I am speaking about. They could barely pay the \$265, furthermore \$400. They cannot pay it.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is saying that civil servants have to pay \$1 000 in road tax on their cars. That is not true.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I am saying that the road taxes and all of the other nuisance taxes the Government has imposed on Barbadians, I said that all the other taxes that I consider to be...

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I am not saying that. I said that if Government can hold the road taxes and all other nuisance taxes, then we will be in a better position. Until Government can put a hold on these taxes, then the people of this country are in a worst position.

I am of the view that by sending a signal to the country, one has to now increase all other wages across the sectors in Barbados, not only the Statutory Boards, but you

are sending a signal that the cost of carpentry, the cost of wages across Barbados will increase.

This year the Government has caused everything to increase. By increasing all these taxes, you must have a situation where people will have to pay higher wages for services and everything will increase. It would cause higher inflation in this country for the next two years and Government has to look carefully at the signal they are sending.

I am saying that the Government must send the signal that we are here to create an atmosphere of investment and to create an atmosphere of fairness. All of these are important signals that Government must send to the people. We are aware that many poor workers in this country cannot make ends meet. What signal are we sending to the working poor in this country?

Sir, there are many people who are working but cannot make ends meet, and these are the people I call the working poor. There are many poor people in this country that have to borrow every week not only for the light bill or buy gas for their stoves, but people in this country are borrowing to make ends meet. We must not stick our heads in the sand. Therefore, to give an increase of 6 per cent when inflation is higher than 6 per cent, is saying to workers that their wages have increased, but you still have to pay more for food in this country.

Sir, I believe that this Government must do much more to protect Barbadians. They must do more to protect Barbadians, if not you are going to have a situation in this country where next year there will be serious problems for, not only the workers, not only the poor, but for those middle-class people who are trying to make ends meet and it is a serious situation.

8.10 p.m.

I believe, and this is what the Opposition is saying, that the high taxes that were placed on Barbadians earlier this year, have caused problems and will continue to cause problems until Government sees that there is a route of all the problems in this country.

The Government has to withdraw and we are encouraging Government to withdraw the measures that were imposed earlier this year. It is a very serious thing, because we are causing serious poverty to increase in this country. We have to do much more to protect the prices. What signals are we sending to the utility companies? The Honourable Member for Christ Church West has spoken to that already.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where the utility companies are doing as they like. They are behaving like

monopolies in this country, whether it is BARTEL, now called LIME, or whether it is the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited. They treated workers very shabbily. They are treating consumers very shabbily. They are doing as they like and the Government must send a signal that these utility companies must not only treat their workers with respect, but they must treat consumers with respect.

Already the Honourable Member for Christ Church West has said that he called LIME and got people in St. Lucia and Jamaica, so we have a situation where workers are being sent home in Barbados but workers in St. Lucia and Jamaica are being hired. We have to watch this.

The unions must protect the workers, because we know that these companies are making huge sums of money. We know that Cable and Wireless has made large sums of money, yet, they are sending home workers and they are not giving pay increases. These things are unfair and a Government has to look very carefully at the signals that we are sending.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious debate. We have to look carefully at the working poor. Sir, I have not even touched those persons who are unemployed, who do not carry home a salary. Therefore, the welfare grant would have to increase. All of these are things that we have to examine.

Sir, I remember that earlier this year, coming from the Government, the question was asked if we did not support the idea that policemen and nurses were special people and they should be treated specially and we did not give them special treatment while we were in Government. I heard this from the Government. Sir, we do not see any special treatment for the policemen and the nurses.

In fact, I must tell this Honourable House that last Election, a group of policemen from Charles Rowe Bridge, which are known to Honourable Members on That Side, who said, in no uncertain terms: "We supported you in that last two Elections, but we cannot support you now, because the Government has promised us special treatment."

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I know because I won all the boxes.

Sir, I do not see the special treatment here. I do not believe that there should be any special treatment, but the Government said so, but they are not treated specially here. They still have to pay the increase in taxes, and they would still have to walk about and borrow to make ends meet like before, so we are not better off. This is a fact.

Mr. Speaker, all during this year, we had people walking about who could not get their needs met. They had to borrow to buy bottled gas, and borrow to pay mortgages. We also had people who could not pay their insurance. Only today, we looked in the newspaper and the policemen are saying that many people are driving about without adequate road insurance and without paying road taxes. Sir, you would find next year that it will get higher and higher.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that this is a new occurrence. The Honourable Member has forgotten that he has brought an amendment to the Road Traffic Act, while he was a Minister of Public Works to stop that.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that people are not driving around without paying road taxes. I am not saying that is not the case now, but I am saying that when it becomes higher, it will also cause further persons to drive around without the appropriate taxes being paid. We are not encouraging it, but I am saying to you that I firmly believe that if Government can control and hold taxes...

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: In fact, the Prime Minister, as the Minister of Finance in this country, is the only Minister who could get up on the Floor of Parliament and say as from tonight, the road taxes that I have announced will be withdrawn and we go back to the taxes of 2007 and that will help the country.

Sir, there is no reason that the Minister of Finance could not bring a mini Budget as well. I am saying that the level of taxation will not assist in this exercise. I am further saying, Mr. Speaker, that the 6 per cent the Government is giving to workers, the workers most likely would be glad for it, I am sure, but I am not sure it will help them very much in the next year or so.

Mr. Speaker, the working poor will still be poor. We have to ask ourselves the question after this debate: Will my constituents who are at the bottom of the level be better off than they were in 2007? Would they be paying more increased prices for their laundry? Would they be paying more increased prices for fuel?

If the answers for the persons who live in the Farm are better off, then the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West can say, I have done my duty, and that the people in my Constituency are better off after this exercise. Therefore, if the answer is yes, they are better off, then the Government has despatched their service in good intent. Sir, if the answer is no, they are not better off, I am saying

to the Government that they have to look at their policies and they must bring a new mini Budget in the near future.

I am further suggesting, and it is a point that I have made over and over in this House. In fact, the Honourable Prime Minister got up on a point of order a couple of weeks ago and said that the Government has not troubled at all their Capital Works Programme. The Government must urgently bring a new Capital Works Programme where they would be sending a signal to the private sector to invest. The Government must spend more money in housing, health and public works, in order to stimulate this economy and reduce taxes. This is what I am saying, but they cannot do all three at the same time. It does not work that way.

Sir, I looked at what the USA is doing. We have heard a pledge from the new elected President of the USA that he wants to stimulate the economy by spending billions of dollars in Capital Works Programmes. I have been saying the same in the last year, but I am not seeing it. The Government must start in earnest and send a signal. We will help the Government. All we are doing is making suggestions.

8.20 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: We invested \$70 million with local firms which helped. I would want to see the Government putting money in the economy next year in order to spur this economy. Mr. Speaker, I hope Government would reduce the level of taxation and those nuisance taxes which would help Barbadians in a great way.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I rise to participate in this debate quite unexpectedly, because I really would have thought that given what the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister responsible for the Public Service would have done in presenting and laying this Resolution before us, would have really not sparked the kind of teenage-like genuflection from Members on the Other Side relative to what really is a very simple matter.

Mr. Speaker, we expect that in a period of some economic restraint, that Administrations, whether they are from This Side or That Side, would look responsibly at the options available to them, analyse the environment within which they are operating and try to arrive at a sensible set of policy options to institute, to protect and to enhance

what we understand to be our own economic fortunes in the context of what is happening in the wider global economy.

Sir, I really have a lot of respect, even though I am told I should not, for the intellect of the Honourable Member for St. George North. Sir, I never thought that the Honourable Member would rise to his feet to make the argument, quite contradictory so, that we are in a recession, that things are getting so bad, that 2009 would be the spectre of doom and gloom but yet...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: You did not say it in those words, but I am trying to put some varnish on the unvarnished nonsense I heard.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot say that.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I withdraw it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Member said, which we cannot describe as unvarnished nonsense, is that in all this doom and gloom, the Government of Barbados should not give a salary increase to the public servants of Barbados. Let us understand what the Honourable Member for St. George North said.

Sir, if the other Honourable Members do not support it, they have until midnight tonight to indicate that they do not support what the Honourable Member for St. George North said. The Honourable Member for St. George North said that the Government should not give a salary increase to hardworking honest public servants but instead...

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I never said that. I made the point that had the Government not increased taxes this year and increased nuisance taxes, the Government could have left salaries unchanged and put us back in the same position as we were in 2007. I made further to say that the Government, having caused inflation in this country, had to give a 6 per cent increase and even though they have given a 6 per cent increase, it does not equate to the inflation they have created. That is what I said.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I am befallen into a state of complete incomprehension as to the Honourable Member's logic that the Government caused inflation by increasing taxes. The only thing the

Honourable Member did not say that I said, that the Honourable Member said, is that the Government should not give a salary increase to hardworking - the Honourable Member did not say hardworking - public officers. Mr. Speaker, let it be said for the record that this Democratic Labour Party Government makes no apologies at all for giving a salary increase, in what the Honourable Member called a crisis situation.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. I have formed my speech in a different way to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Mr. SPEAKER: As you are entitled to.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: My argument is and has always been - and I have said it very carefully - that the level of taxes and nuisance increases this year have really caused in many ways, the Social Partners, the private sector and everything in Barbados to increase and it will cause hyper inflation in this country. Mr. Speaker, having caused this, the Government has given a 6 per cent increase, no problem, but this does not help the situation that inflation would continue to rise.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the cost of carpentry, the cost of masonry, the cost of labour and the cost of everything would go up because of this. That is the argument.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have said that twice now. Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time and in the interest of intellectual sanity, I will move on. I am not going to bog down the Honourable House speaking about carpentry and masonry. I am going to try to proceed, because the Honourable Member who just got up on the non-point of order, is the very Minister that presided over the fiasco of the ABC Highway. The main project managers for the project have been heard to say that it is not them who caused the cost over-runs, that they were caused by the previous Government, and the Honourable Member was the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance came in here in the Budget and specifically said in punctilious articulation, that he had to find money to pay off the enormous debt and the expense of a highway project which did not have a properly drawn contract. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, after standing up in this Parliament and vehemently denying it, went in another place and admitted that if she had to do it, the contract would have been done differently.

8.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, when the Honourable Member gets up to speak about road taxes, the people of Barbados have to understand that the road taxes they are paying are as a result of the financial bungling, the mismanagement, the mis-appropriate and scandalous management of public finances and public affairs by that Party.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, we are here today to be subjected to this kind of funeral director sanctimonious thing, about how you are killing the poor people. Sir, the Honourable Member feels that if he throws in the words, "the people in the Farm...."

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I am telling you, the public servants living in the Farm Housing Area are better off with this increase. They are better off because in the face of opposition from the Barbados Labour Party, the Democratic Labour Party has had to have school children riding freely on Government buses. Sir, they are saying that we have not done anything, yet the people in the housing areas, such as The Farm, Black Rock, St. Stephen's, Fernihurst, Rosemont, the ones who are going to get their units "for free", the ones who no longer are required to pay rent, where some now pay up to \$400 a month, we have done nothing for them. Sir, those people are happy too. Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what they are not happy about, and the last time this Honourable House met, I did not speak in the housing debate, but I will tell you what they were not happy about, because the Honourable Member was Minister of Housing and Lands.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: The Honourable Member was the Minister of the land bank. If the Honourable Member were to save on his own personal bank, as he saves on the land bank, the Honourable Member would be a 'zillionaire'. Sir, the Honourable Member just puts land into the land bank and never uses it, and every week I have to be subjected to the agony of people coming into my office wanting house lots and housing.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I am speaking seriously in this debate and I believe that all Honourable Members know that we are on the precipice of a major social problem in Barbados in relation to housing. This situation has been left by 14 years of scandalous mismanagement and lack of caring for the poor and powerless among us.

Sir, now we have to come here and sit and listen to this kind of thing from the Barbados Labour Party. It is not good enough. Sir, I am not part of the blaming game, but let us lay-bare the facts. The Barbados Labour Party built six houses and we now have the Honourable Member for St. Philip North under pressure. There are 25 000 applications for housing, of which about 24 999 were built up in the last 14 years.

These people are now running him down for houses. He has now had to quickly get a number of housing projects running, to try to break the bank, yet the Barbados Labour Party had this large land bank, with Lady Bird houses, Tweetie Bird houses and all kinds of fancy things, and up to when they left office, they could not produce one of those houses.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance came here and said that he will increase the Reverse Tax Credits, yet we have done nothing.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: The Prime Minister said he will increase the reverse tax credit to put more disposable income into the hands of ordinary Barbadians, particularly those at the bottom. People are going to get their back pay by this Resolution. Again they are going to get their salary increases, yet rather than standing up as Honourable Members and recognising the responsible attitude of the National Union of Public Workers.....

Mr. Speaker, we too have our arguments with the National Union of Public Workers. We believe that in some instances they are unreasonable but when they have acted responsibly and in the interest of all Barbadians in this national economy, you have to recognise it and call a spade a spade, and they have acted responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to reflect on the other group of institutions. That is a matter for them, they have to represent their members. They know best what their Members want. They know what mandate they have been given to negotiate with, and they will do what they have to do, but at the end of the day, we have a responsibility, not only to public workers, but to all workers.

Sir, what this agreement does is to send a signal to the very people that you are talking about, when you talk about LIME, Cable and Wireless and others. It signals that they should take the lead from this Government, that in spite of the fact that we are having and can have potentially economic difficulties, this Government is leading the way and holding its own. It suggests the fact that we are not

laying off workers as a first option, nor that we are trying to freeze wages as a first option.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member seems as though he is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member said that as a first option, the Government is not thinking of laying off workers. Sir, I wonder if there is a second option.

Mr. Speaker, the inference is that the Honourable Member is saying, and the Honourable Member is a Minister of the Cabinet, is whether or not it is an option at all. Sir, I think the Honourable Prime Minister said it was not an option and so, I am wondering what is happening.

The signal here is coming through that the Prime Minister is saying that there is not an option to lay off workers and I am hearing from the Honourable Member that to lay-off workers is not a first option. Would the Honourable Member care to tell this Honourable House what is the second option?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, that is not a point of order.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member would pay attention to what I am saying, the Governor of the Central Bank has been making the point, ad nauseam, that the private companies in Barbados should not use, as a first option, retrenching of workers, that they should look at alternative methods for cost savings.

Mr. Speaker, I have made the point that as a Government we have not even considered that as a first option.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: There is no first and second option. We operate on certain basic principles. We will protect and defend those in society who cannot protect and defend themselves in economic crises. We will pay our bills. We will not wreck this economy and be unable to pay our bills.

8.40 p.m.

Sir, I personally believe in paying bills. If I owe Mannings, I am going to pay them; if I own Cave Shepherd, I am going to pay them and if I owe the Anglican Diocese, I am going to pay them too

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is suggesting that some people here cannot pay their bills.

Sir, we know that the Honourable Member is very flushed and that he can pay his bills, and by this increase, the Honourable Member will be able to pay his bills in the Farm.

Mr. SPEAKER: No point of order. Continue Honourable Member.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I never suggested or intended to suggest that there are not Honourable Members in here who cannot pay their bills. I believe that all Honourable Members can pay their bills, but whether they do or not, is an entirely different matter. Sir, I do not know that part, because I am not into their personal finances.

I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, based on the document that was made a document of the House, can more than pay her bills acquired. Sir, the point is that it is our first line of defence. You seek to protect, you look at what you have and you make a determination based on what is happening economically, how it will impact on you, how it will impact on revenue and then you fashion your economic policy accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, I went through the 1991 to 1993 period and I know full well that when you get a situation where your wages bill, in terms of a percentage of GDP, approaches a point where it exceeds your level of economic output, in terms of GDP, in nominal terms, you are running yourself into potential problems. Sir, we have seen that and we have history as a lesson, that Barbados as a small vulnerable open economy, can only rely on the competitiveness of its economic sectors to survive.

In other words, we need to be able to competitively export goods and services and, therefore, wages not only have to follow inflation, but wages also have to respond to productivity indicators. Sir, that is what has to happen so this type of sterile debate saying that inflation is 8 per cent or 10 per cent, so you must give a 10 per cent increase or that inflation is 12 per cent so you must have 12 per cent increase, it cannot be done within such narrow confines in terms of your fundamental analysis.

Mr. Speaker, you have to think about your levels of productivity. We have to begin to move to that stage where you begin to determine in large measure, the movement of wages, not only in relation to inflation, but also in relation to productivity. Sir, I believe that is what we have been trying to do over the years with the Social Partnership.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Partnership that the Opposition boasted of when they were in Government has big signing ceremonies all over the place, is now not something that we should be proud of now that they are in Opposition. We should not be proud of the Social Partnership, but the Prime Minister is to position himself as the Lord economist on whom every word, in relation to the management of the Barbados economy.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from a process of defending Barbados' human rights before the Human Rights Council. Sir, one of the things they pointed out that everybody spoke about was the Social Partnership that we have in Barbados. Sir, it is something positive that we should be trying to enhance as part of our system of governance, to introducing new vistas of participatory democracy, which of course, will expand in fundamental ways when the Constituency Councils become a part of the system, but now we hear people pour cold water with a garden hose on the Social Partnership. They say it is not worth anything anymore, because they are not in Government.

Mr. Speaker, we do not operate like that. It is that type of political "ad hocism" that is destroying politics, economics and sociology in Barbados. Sir, we have to be serious about this. You cannot give people the impression that you must not raise taxes because we have to pay taxes. Sir, nobody likes to pay taxes, but you have to pay them in order to assist with the management of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, could you imagine, if the Honourable Minister of Finance had not imposed those taxes on the economy, in a period of economic decline, as we are supposed to be having, what we would have ended up with in these circumstances? Sir, this new love affair with right wing economics, where you must cut this tax, cut that tax and run a low tax regime because you do not need taxes is applied side economics. Sir, we were all neo-Keisian economists believing...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Yes. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter is a neo-Keisian economist believing in the mixed economy, in a fiscal policy mix that allows for taxes and allows for some injection of resources as disposable income in the pockets of people that they too can invest, create jobs and so forth. Sir, that is the right way, but the Opposition is now saying to us that we should slash this tax, slash that tax.

There is all this fascination by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East with stimulus packages. She says to give us a stimulus package now, but

that is the “CNNism”. You go home and watch NBC and CNN and hear somebody talk about bringing a stimulus package. You pick up all these words, drop them and make people believe that you have this great knowledge of economics. It was counter-cyclical and it is not the stimulus package. Sir, all these fancy things that mean nothing to people.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Sir, it is sloganeering and political sophistry, but that is not going to solve problems in Barbados. Sir, what we have to do is simple. The first thing we have to do is not to panic and run the horses out of the barn, because when they gallop away, you cannot catch them back.

What we need to do is to measure and watch the circumstances of the global economy properly to determine the extent of which we need to make adjustments, determine what those adjustments are and ensure that they do not cause us to make unnecessary interventions in this economy that could cause instability in it, ensure that when we do move, that we do so with a clarity of purpose and with a determination to ensure that we keep investment levels, that we continue to reduce the national debt, that we return growth to the economy and that we grow jobs. Sir, that is what we need to do.

Mr. President, behind that, we need to invest and re-invest in a strong social safety net, so that any person who may fall through the cracks because of economic crises, could be properly supported. Sir, that is why when I have the opportunity as the new Minister of Social Care in Barbados to address this Honourable House on this issue, I will be giving a broad exposition in reinforcement of what the social policy of the Democratic Labour Party will be to treat to any crisis that will be created in this country and it will be about investing in the human capital of Barbados.

8.50 p.m.

Sir, there is nothing else, in my view, to detain this Honourable House in relation to this matter.

I hope the Honourable Members of the Opposition join with the Government in rewarding the public servants, and at the same time they are rewarding themselves, even though some of them may not be deserving of it, given how they managed the Barbados economy. If we had to do productivity increases, some of you all will be struggling, but we are generous enough to invest in the human capital of the Opposition, because we must have a good Opposition in the interest of democracy, so we will do that. Join with us in ensuring that the public servants can have a happy Christmas, that they can continue over the next two years to be able to support themselves and their families.

Finally, that the public servants of Barbados can be treated, not only to sterile narrowed debates back and forth on this increase and that increase, but that we can do a holistic treatment for the public servants of this country, working conditions, proper buildings to work in and not sick buildings, better working conditions, better terms of service on top of the increase which we have done here.

I would hope that you all will learn to read the entire agreement and see that agreement goes not just a 6 per cent here or a 4 per cent there, but that there are other fundamental things that we will try to do for public servants in this country, God willing, and with the cooperation of the Social Partners of Barbados.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I propose to wind up now. I cannot say that the debate that we just had was characterised by any surprises. I feel strongly that Honourable Members should, as part of their orientation to being in this House of Assembly, acquaint themselves with the history of their own political Party. I must say that I have seen some departures in this debate.

The Honourable Member for St. George North reminds me that I have been in this Chamber for 20 years, but I have been coming to this House, even when I was not a Member and sitting in the Public Gallery for 32 years, from the time I was in fifth form at school.

I cannot think of an occasion in which there was ever a salary debate in which the Opposition Benches were not fully constituted. It is a sad reflection on the state of the Opposition. Such a scant representation of its most senior Membership has been reflected in this debate, so it has been left to lesser likes, and I do not mean that in any disparaging way. I am not reflecting on their intellect or their ability, but it has been left to lesser likes to hold up the flag of the Barbados Labour Party.

Sir, this debate is not really about politics. I will get to the substance of it. I was particularly stunned. I do not like it and it has never been my habit in the House of Assembly, despite the protestation of Honourable Members on That Side, that I play the man and not the ball. One very bad thing is for you to launch an attack on a public officer who sits defenselessly in the Public Gallery.

I have seen it done on several occasions by Honourable Members on That Side when in Government. I thought they would have learnt something when the public put them in Opposition, but it is a travesty and it speaks to this idea of playing the man. Nobody can accuse anybody

on This Side of playing the man when you launched a blistering attack on a public officer who has to sit in the Public Gallery, as a matter of duty, and has to face that blistering attack. It is a wanton irresponsible activity that I do not condone.

Sir, I do not mind people going on political platforms, and saying what they want to do within the four corners of the Law, where that public officer or anybody else can reply, but to do it in this Chamber, when somebody has to sit and accept opprobrium heat on their head, full well knowing that they cannot reply, it is an unforgivable act of political cowardice.

I want to make it abundantly clear, if I can, to Honourable Members on my Side, do not try it. It is bad form. I have seen it from this very chair, sitting over there, watching this chair, happen time and time again. Now we are in a salaries debate, once again a public officer comes under a wilful attack by the Members on the Other Side. If I were minded to respond to one of those attacks, I would have reminded Honourable Members on That Side that in 1976, the then General Secretary of the NUPW, leading the NUPW, claimed 100 per cent increase in salaries at the bottom. He then rejected a 30 per cent increase that was offered by the then Government. He claimed 60 per cent at the top and 100 per cent at the bottom.

I hope that the NUPW will itself make a note of this. Do not feel ashamed of anything. The then Government pointed out that was not in keeping with inflation. It was not in keeping with growth. It was not reasonable. The then General Secretary joined in alliance with others.

I heard today about pay back time and who is beholden to who, rejected a 30 per cent increase and as soon as the General Elections were called, he was made a Senator and Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for Immigration, and then reigned terror on the Immigration, terror on the health services and terror on the Urban Development Commission in this country, and you have the temerity to talk about pay back time. If you want to know about pay back time, there is a sad, sorry and putrid history by the Barbados Labour Party, in relation to the defenseless and almost destruction of the NUPW in this country.

The example that has been set by those public officers in this particular scenario is exemplary and is at the highest standard to be expected of the NUPW. It is no longer in the political mire, worse than pond water.

The NUPW has raised its head up with a new breed of professionals promoted on merit. I heard that there is a new Public Service Act that ensures that people are promoted on merit, not on whim. I am glad to hear that, because I became Prime Minister after it was passed, so

nobody can say I promoted anybody on whim, according to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. From the day it was passed in December 2007, public officers can only be promoted on merit and are not protected. So my hands are tied and I do not mind. My hands are clean in that regard.

Sir, they want to talk out of both sides of their mouths. They want to say we put the Law in place to protect public officers from politicians out of one side of their mouth.

9.00 p.m.

They then talk in wishy-washy platitudes and epithets and other things that I would not describe, and then out of the Other Side of the mouth later on in the speech, they accuse us of a reign of terror against public officers, which they passed legislation to protect. Sir, all of that occurred in one speech from people on That Side of the House, a speech that ranged all over the place.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The allegations made on This Side related to persons at Statutory Corporations who do not come under the Public Service Act, so that this is clearly an intention to just merge information for those who are innocent and ignorant of the facts.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I may not have been in my seat, but my memory is extremely good and has always been. I heard about public officers being accused of sabotage, not the people in statutory corporations, or was it a different part of the speech.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, you see what I tell you. I just said that is what happens. The speech is compartmentalised. It is rumour, hearsay, a little bit of fact, some more rumour and hearsay.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I can understand why he may want to remember sabotage sitting next to the Honourable Member who talked about sabotage, but the allegations about dismissals from the Opposition related to employees of Statutory Corporations.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I have always said in here that one characteristic of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is that she delivers a speech and then when you criticise it, she realises she did not really want to make that speech, so she

gets up on points of order to correct the speech that she had previously delivered.

I could have predicted, Sir, that as I started to respond, an attempt would be made to get up to try and reconstruct a bad speech, to reconstruct a speech that was empty, a speech that had no substance.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West said that he picks up the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto for comedy. Sir, but you only have to watch TV tonight, and you do not need comedy. Watch the news and there will be enough comedy emanating from the Benches of Members on That Side on the television news, in relation to the Parliamentary report.

Sir, as I have said, there has been no consistency. Let us deal with the issues as we have them, and how wild the allegations are. We have been accused of increasing fees and taxes on public officers, the majority of which do not kick in until January 1, 2009.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North is brilliant. He said, if we had not increased taxes, which taxes he said cannot be collected, then civil servants would not need an increase.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I thought that takes the cake in this Parliament. Let me repeat.

If we had not increased taxes, which taxes cannot be collected, as he said, the people are not paying - and he quoted the Commissioner of Police to establish that people are not paying the taxes that we increased - but if we had not increased taxes that the people are not paying, we would not have to pay civil servants an increase in salary.

Sir, that is what the Barbados Labour Party has come to, in its 70th year, as a political institution. It cannot get full attendance at this Parliament of its most senior Members for a major debate on Civil Service salaries. Its position is characterised by comedy, rumour, suspicion, wild allegations, inconsistencies, lack of any historical analysis, lack of economic analysis, people washing all over the place on all kinds of issues.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I do not have a problem if the Members of the Barbados Labour Party wish to curse the public officers in Barbados, that is their business. If they wish to abuse the NUPW for agreeing to a sensible wage settlement that is their business.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, as is his wont to do. The reality is that our position

and comments we made against the NUPW, relate to persons who are being unfairly at Statutory Corporations. Sir, if that is not a legitimate comment, I do not know what is, but for the Honourable Member for St. John to say that we cursed either a public officer or that we cursed the NUPW for agreeing to this settlement, is untrue.

We have said that we do not believe that the settlement would meet the needs of the workers. We have said that, but we did not curse them for the settlement. We complained that the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW) has not raised their voices about the workers who are being unfairly at Statutory Corporations. Sir, the Honourable Member would know more about that than any of us in here.

Mr. SPEAKER: I find no point of order.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, one of the theme songs in the last Election was "she is royal" and I know from my study of the Victorian era, when there was a Queen, that she did not use word, "I". She used the word, "we". The Honourable Member could only mean, we, meaning, "I" unless she did not hear the speech of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West made a very serious allegation, both against the current Deputy General Secretary of the NUPW and a further allegation against the current President of the NUPW. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, by implication, made a serious allegation against the President of the NUPW, in the debate.

I understood what that allegation was. I understood the intent of the statement. I do not think anybody in here was in any doubt about the intent of those allegations. I am therefore saying you are free to continue on that trend, if you wish, but the position is simple.

Mr. Speaker, if you are basing your argument on inflation, then there is every prospect - and I am going to say this for the benefit of the Honourable Member for St. George North, even if it is only to introduce a new word into his vocabulary - that they may be deflationary. In fact, one of the reasons public expenditure is being ramped up, is one of the reasons President-elect Barack Obama announced a fiscal stimulus programme, the elements of which had been announced by this Government, a month prior. He is going to increase expenditure on drainage, road works, education and there was one other area, which I do not remember, but bridges and so on, infrastructure, and health, in the sense of providing health care.

Sir, we had announced that as our strategy, a strategy that they say we do not have, and I then identified the projects, which I heard the Honourable Member for the

City identified that would form part of that. We said that those private sector companies, which had projects that were in consonance with Government's objectives, like the building of Government offices, that to maintain their employment roles, we would seek to fast-track those projects.

9.10 p.m.

In addition to that, the Honourable Member for St. George North only spoke about the tax increases, some of which have not even taken place. The Honourable Member did not talk about the increase in pensions. He has not talked about the acceleration of the Reverse Tax Credit. He has not talked about the initiatives in the housing sector.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You were highly complimented by some Prime Ministers from the Caribbean. When they looked physically at what was happening in our country, they felt that the one area in which Barbados had not made the kind of advance that we should have made as a society, is in relation to housing, but they complimented the Honourable Member for St. Philip North for his major initiative.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North, through creative joint-venture partnerships with the private sector... Mr. Speaker, because we know that bridging finance is necessary, we had to fast-track projects and we had to look for private sector partners that could get the houses out of the ground. There are better and more creative ways of executing Government's capital works programme as well, not only BOLT arrangements, because there is no Law in Barbados yet to cover BOLT arrangements due to the negligence of the Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

I am not going to propose any further BOLT arrangements until that Law is put in place. That is why we had to bring them under the existing loans legislation. I presume that if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East had remained on as Attorney-General before being demoted, that particular lacuna in the Law...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You never got Trade, Industry and Commerce. That monkey thing that you had. I was doing that as Minister of Finance.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please avoid the cross-talk.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. We have to have new ways of executing, because the one area of concern... We could talk about increasing capital expenditure and we can lift all those capital works projects, but Government's capacity to execute those capital works projects is always constrained by a number of things, and we therefore have to find new ways to get those going.

The regional Diaspora needs to know that Barbados ranks No.3 in the hemisphere in relation to the integrity of its banking system. We rank only after Chile and Canada. Mr. Speaker, the money of Barbadians living in the United States of America and in other parts of the world, contrary to some of the nonsense that you hear, is safer in Barbados than it is in the banks in the United States of America and in many of the other continents of the world. Mr. Speaker, we have to find instruments to facilitate their long-term investment in this country and to get those deposits here in our banking system in this country. That is another initiative that can be pursued.

Mr. Speaker, there are some other smaller things that can be done. Mr. Speaker, I heard Honourable Members talked about how difficult it is to implement some of the changes proposed.

The structure of Cabinet in Barbados is being changed as well to introduce a new tier of Cabinet sub-committees that would deal exclusively with implementation and infrastructure, that will deal with social policy - I have asked the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East to help service the Cabinet sub-committee on social policy - that would deal with economic issues and that would deal with issues of governance, so that the Cabinet as a full entity can focus on strategic decisions instead of being bogged down with small issues like public officers travelling and the approval of small pieces of legislation. A Cabinet needs to be able to focus on the larger development issues that affect the country.

Mr. Speaker, I have noticed it in the recommendations of the Task Force, but we had already agreed before the Task Force laid its Report, that we were going to make some significant changes in that regard. Mr. Speaker, the reason I raised the deflationary issue is because it could also be possible that as a result - and one hopes not - of reduced economic activity, that there is a deflationary cycle in those countries from which we import most of our goods.

Sir, the Honourable Member was predicating an argument on this concept that prices would not be reduced. If you go to Miami tomorrow, you would find that the Malls there, Western Mall and the others, which hundreds of people were in before are like ghost towns.

For the first time in my life, I went into a Best Buy to buy a piece of computer equipment and had salesmen tripping themselves to come to me to sell it. When you go to Target or Walmart, there are no lines anymore. You can pick any of the 17 cash registers.

Mr. Speaker, persons must understand what has happened in the United States of America. Therefore, we have to be cognisant of the impact of a deflationary cycle in the United States of America and in the United Kingdom as well as the impact of a recession in Canada and the Caribbean, and how we are going to deal with remaining competition in what could be an 18-month to two-year deflationary cycle in the world economy. That is where our challenge is.

Mr. Speaker, this wages increase in and of itself, cannot be predicated on the concept that there is going to be any raging inflationary cycle or raging inflation next year. That is unlikely to be so. The Trinidad and Tobago Government has already lost 40 per cent of its revenues as a result of the reduction in oil prices. They predicated their Budget on oil being \$70 a barrel. This is Trinidad and Tobago that was booming two months ago.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The reserves can disappear quickly. It can happen anywhere in the world, not just here. It takes good management to ensure that does not happen. That is what economic management in small economies is about. What is happening in Trinidad and Tobago is different. When you go through each of the Caribbean islands, the effects of the international crisis are different. It has affected Trinidad and Tobago worse than it has affected any economy in the Caribbean.

The Jamaican dollar has recently been devalued. They have had problems with short-term lines of credit and so on. We are slightly more fortunate in Barbados, because of the very thing that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West told me to ignore, the Social Partnership, in which by and large we can share overall information and we can agree on certain targets for development objectives and certain economic targets. Mr. Speaker, everybody can buy into four, five or six objectives that we are going to pursue as a nation during the time of crisis. Mr. Speaker, that is the difference between Barbados and many countries in the Caribbean and many countries in the world. Therefore, I am not going to disrupt that by being unilateral or being objectionable in the way in which economic policy is conducted in Barbados.

There may be points and times at which we disagree but as long as we can build consensus, and as long as we can make the Social Partnership more representative of a wider cross-section of Barbadian groups, particularly those

in the informal sector, I believe that we can weather this storm. It will not be easy. In fact, I suspect next year would be a tough year.

9.20 p.m.

The reason we are seeking to ensure that we put in place salary arrangements for the public sector is because we have made provision for it and we wanted to ensure that it was done during this fiscal year. Sir, we will do whatever we could, not only in relation to wages.

Mr. Speaker, the point the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West made is critical. The Honourable Member made the point that there are public officers, even those identified in our Manifesto, which the Honourable Member for Christ Church West reads for comic relief, with whom I have met before the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals.

Mr. Speaker, what did the teachers say to me? The teachers said that they have read what is promised in the Manifesto, but that those things were not yet their priority. What was of priority was the appointment of teachers, which was very slow. There are over 200 teachers who had not yet been appointed, which means they could not get credit, credit cards or loans from the banks. We said we would speed that up.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, teachers raised issues of security, and we have started a process of chainlink fencing at all primary schools in Barbados. That was more important to them, for the time being, than what we had promised in our Manifesto.

The Police sat down with me and said they liked what was promised in our Manifesto. However, they had some other priorities. That is why I say the Barbadian way is a different way because they said they know what position this Government was in, what we had inherited.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, therefore, in the context of what they thought was possible at this time....Sir, Barbadians are not foolish. People in this country understand and when we foolishly pander, they know when we are pandering. Sir, the Police said these were the things that concerned them most. Almost every police station in Barbados is in a state of disrepair. Police had health problems. They had other kinds of challenges that need to be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, likewise, public officers said to us, yes, these proposals look good but they were more concerned with the spate of concurrent illnesses that are occurring in buildings across the public sector in Barbados. That was

worrying public officers more than some of the things that we had promised in our Manifesto.

Mr. Speaker, we said okay, that we would focus on improving accommodation for public sector workers in Barbados. Sir, we have, therefore, established some important things that are our priorities in relation to the public sector, apart from these wage increases. Sir, each Minister responsible has looked at them.

Mr. Speaker, likewise in the Ministry of Health, in relation to the plight of nurses, they raised concerns that had very little to do with specific terms and conditions of service, but had a lot more to do with working conditions in Barbados in our major public health institution.

Sir, it is those issues, I think we need to spend our time focussing on, as long as we are able to give our public servants an increase that is commensurate with the rate of inflation, slightly more, as long as their standard of living does not decline.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West talking, but the only time in the past 14 years that the increase was not commensurate with inflation was in the last agreement which they negotiated. Inflation was 10.5 per cent and the increase was 10 per cent over the period. That was the first only time in 14 years.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Oh! There was? Well, I am glad to hear that. Oh!. There were three times?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: So you are challenging the official statistics. But do you know what the people in the union told me? They told me that despite all the talk about the trigger, they had to fight to get the trigger triggered. Sir, there was all this talk about trigger, as if they were so magnanimous and as if they negotiated it, but it was the unions who asked for it. The Government did not put it on the table. It was the unions who put it on the table.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the unions put it on the table, at a time when they did not even get 70 per cent of what they had asked for. In this environment, we are giving them 70 per cent.

Sir, congratulations to the National Union of Public Workers for getting 70 per cent of what they asked for. Therefore, one needs to understand the environment in which we are functioning.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I cannot tell the Opposition how to do their business, I have put all of that behind me on January 16, but I would urge Honourable Members on That Side to think about how hard they are trying because in their attempt to fulfill their obligations as Opposition, they are becoming out of touch and out of tune with reality in this country. They are becoming out of touch and out of tune with their own perceptions and the things that they left undone.

Mr. Speaker, this must be the first time in the history of the change of Government in Barbados that you could see Members of the Opposition taking up their Manifestos and reading them, as if they were the ones that have been elected. Those Manifestos contain promises and performances which the public has rejected. Sir, it shows a level of political arrogance that can spell doom for them.

Sir, it is not for me to warn the Opposition, because I have no interest in their success. I have never applied to join the Barbados Labour Party, neither has anybody ever asked me to join. Further, I will never join. I have no interest in the success of the Barbados Labour Party. I have an interest in the success of Barbados and whatever contribution the Barbados Labour Party could make, we would be in it together, but if the Barbados Labour Party does not understand how to function, it is not for me to correct them. Therefore, I am saying to you that this should be a salutary moment in the life of the Barbados Labour Party. You could either continue on that trend of 14 years of abuse of public officers...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Do not mind the Public Service Act. Public servants in this country are not foolish. They know what they went through. They know what the calls at midnight, with the abuse of the telephone, were all about. They know the other forms of terrorism that were visited upon them for those 14 years, and the intimidation at all levels continues. They know the consultants that were brought in and put over qualified public officers.

They know the way in which projects were designed in Barbados, not to help the public, but to ensure the survival of the Barbados Labour Party. They had been able to tell us about all of that, so do not come with this sanctimonious argument, as if you are washed in the Blood of the Lamb, and your hands are clean and, as a result of passing an Act, all should go well.

Mr. Speaker, I well recall the last Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals delivered by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, where concessions after concessions were given. When I left this Honourable Chamber, my Members were depressed, because they thought that those concessions offered - the kind of things

the Honourable Member for St. George North likes were petty. The Honourable Member does not like petty taxes. He likes petty concessions. He likes give-aways.

Sir, I have an abiding faith in the people of this country that they would have seen past that. Mr. Speaker, we had a public meeting weeks later and had hundreds of Barbadians at it. Sir, it is not about tinkering, there are bigger issues that impact on peoples' lives.

Sir, people could now turn on their televisions and choose between CNN, NBC, ABC, Fox News, and come to their own assessment about what is happening in the world, about what is likely to happen to their children, and what is going to happen to them. They do not need us to interpret it for them. They needed Errol Barrow to do that, because the only thing they had was Rediffusion, and in some villages one television, but we live in the year 2008, in which children can access the Internet like their parents.

9.30 p.m.

Sir, children do not even need their parents to explain to them what their world vision should be. We have to battle against the forces that inform them to put things in context.

Mr. Speaker, part of our exercise in Barbados in this modern era, is to try to help Barbadians to focus on what our national goals are. They are not ignorant of what is happening internationally. It is for us to focus on the things that are unique and characteristic of Barbados, both Barbadians at home and those who live abroad who want to contribute to our success as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, in this enterprise, as I have said, there will be those who disagree and in everything there are going to be those who do not support you and I accept. We are not asking for total support, because criticism is sometimes healthy. I compliment those who negotiated this agreement, both from the point of view of the Government as well as those from the private sector.

I believe that the public officers in Barbados are being rewarded for their contribution to the development of this country in consonance with our economic fundamentals. Whenever opportunities arise for us, not only to deal with the impact of inflation, but to reward public officers for increased productivity, for increase in our gross domestic product, for increase in any indicator that enhances the quality of life of our people, the Democratic Labour Party stands ready to assist them in that regard.

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

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

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PUBLIC SERVICE (TEACHERS) ORDER, 2008.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to approve the Public Service (Teachers) Order, 2008.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PUBLIC SERVICE (PART-TIME OFFICERS) ORDER, 2008.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to approve the Public Service (Part-Time) Order, 2008.

Hon. F.J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 8 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY (REMUNERATION AND ALLOWANCES OF MEMBERS) ORDER, 2008.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to approve the Senate and House of Assembly (Remuneration and Allowances of Members) Order, 2008.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 9 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE MINISTERS AND PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES (REMUNERATION AND ALLOWANCES) ORDER, 2008.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to approve the Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries (Remuneration and Allowances) Order, 2008.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 10 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RATES OF SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES APPLICABLE TO THE POSTS OF PERSONAL ASSISTANT, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT, THE PRESS SECRETARY, EXECUTIVE PERSONAL SECRETARY AND CLERICAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRIME MINISTER AS SET OUT IN THE SCHEDULE.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to approve the rates of salaries and allowances applicable to the posts of Personal Assistant, Executive Assistant, the Press Secretary, Executive Personal Secretary and Clerical Assistant to the Prime Minister as set out in the Schedule.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 11 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RATES OF SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES APPLICABLE TO THE POSTS OF PERSONAL ASSISTANTS TO MINISTERS AS SET OUT IN THE SCHEDULE.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to approve the rates of salaries and allowances applicable to the posts of Personal Assistants to Ministers as set out in the Schedule.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 12 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PAYMENT OF AN INCREASED COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE TO GOVERNMENT PENSIONERS.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the

Resolution to approve the payment of an increased cost of living allowance to government pensioners.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 13 – RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE SCHEDULE TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL (CONDITIONS OF SERVICE) ACT, CAP. 6.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to amend the Schedule to the Governor-General (Conditions of Service) Act, Cap. 6.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 14 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE JUDGES REMUNERATION AND PENSIONS (CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND ALLOWANCES)(AMENDMENT) REGULATION, 2008.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to move the passing of the Resolution to approve the Judges Remuneration and Pensions (Conditions of Service and Allowances)(Amendment) Regulation, 2008.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government Business for today.

I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, December 16, 2008, at 10.00 a.m.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that.

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, December 16, 2008 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

9.40 p.m.

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BRATHWAITE, Mr. A. D. (St. Philip South)
CLARKE, Mr. G. A. (St. George North)
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EASTMOND, Mr. C.
EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)
ESTWICK, Dr. the Hon. D. C. (St. Philip West)
FORDE, Miss C. Y. (St. Thomas)
JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)
KELLMAN, His Excellency D. St.E. (St. Lucy)
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MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)
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SINCKLER, Hon. C. P. (St. Michael North West)
STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)
THOMPSON, Hon. D. J. H. (St. John)
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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. Minutes. The Speaker's words confirming the Minutes ('Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let those Minutes stand confirmed.') are run into Hon. J. D. E. Boyce's speech as seconder in the source. Printed as in the source.

Q2. Order No. 4, point of privilege. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley is recorded as beginning one intervention 'Mr. President, on a point of privilege', although the Speaker was in the Chair. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 4, Miss C. Y. Forde. A one-line remark, 'You should be in the Vault Road because you are a dead Prime Minister.', stands under Miss C. Y. Forde's label between two takes; it may be an interjection by another Member. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Suspension of Sitting. The Leader of the House moves that the Sitting be suspended 'until 1.45 p.m.', but the procedural note records the question put as suspension 'until 1.30 p.m.'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Heading after Order No. 4. The heading reads 'RECOMMITTAL QUESTION TIME'; under it only a question from Dr. W. F. Duguid on a new hospital is recorded, with no answer and no recommitment. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 7. The heading gives the 'PUBLIC SERVICE (PART-TIME OFFICERS) ORDER, 2008', while the motion reads 'Public Service (Part-Time) Order, 2008'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Speaker labels. Mr. R. C. Eastmond's main speech on Order No. 4 is labelled 'Mr. C. EASTMOND' and Hon. R. D. Jones is labelled 'Mr. R. D. JONES' when laying papers. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, 9th December, 2008, with the Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood. After the Minutes of 25th November were confirmed, Hon. R. D. Jones, on behalf of the Prime Minister, laid ten papers, among them the Public

Service (General) Order, 2008, the Public Service (Teachers) Order, 2008 and the Senate and House of Assembly (Remuneration and Allowances of Members) Order, 2008, and Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick laid the Annual Report of the Fair Trading Commission for the year ending 31st March, 2008. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2008 was read a first time and Standing Orders were suspended for the rest of the Sitting.

Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, Minister of Transport and Works and Member for Christ Church South, moved the second reading of the Transport Board (Amendment) Bill, 2008, which raises the Board's membership from seven to nine to bring in more skills. He said the free school bus service had settled at around 500 000 rides a month, about 24 per cent above the previous year. Early in his speech the Speaker declined to hear out a point of order from Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, who then claimed, on a point of privilege, the right of every Member to complete a point of order, citing Erskine May; Mr. G. W. Payne supported her, and the Speaker ruled that the Chair must decide whether a point of order had been raised.

Mr. G. A. Clarke, Member for St. George North, said the Minister had spoken for an hour and 15 minutes and made one point, questioned the cost of refurbishing buses and suggested the new Board places were for party members; Mr. Boyce said slightly less than \$500 000 had been spent on the fleet. His Honour K. St.C. Best, Mr. R. C. Eastmond, Hon. P. M. T. Todd, His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman and Miss C. Y. Forde, who spoke at length on roads in St. Thomas including Vault Road, also spoke. The Bill passed all its stages, Mr. S. A. Lashley chairing the Committee, and Dr. W. F. Duguid then asked the Prime Minister whether a new hospital would be built or the existing plant refurbished.

The Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, Member for St. John, moved the Resolution to approve the Public Service (General) Order, 2008, and the House agreed that Orders Nos. 5 to 13 be debated together. He said the last accord had expired on 31st March, 2008; Government spent about \$1 billion a year on salaries, or about 46 per cent of current revenue; the previous agreement of 10 per cent had been outpaced by inflation of 10.5 per cent; and the 10.5 per cent now offered over two years was 70 per cent of what the National Union of Public Workers had asked for and higher than any increase given by the previous Administration. He put the gross cost at about \$65 million in the first year and \$52 million in the second, and noted that the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados had not accepted the offer.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, Member for St. Michael North East, argued that the first-year increase of 6 per cent fell short of likely inflation of 8.5 to 9 per cent, and that the extra cost would be less than the \$19 million written off for the Barbados Turf Club; she recalled the automatic cost of living trigger in the 2003 settlement. His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman, Mr. R. C. Eastmond, Mr. A. D. Brathwaite, Mr. S. A. Lashley, Hon. R. D. Jones, Hon. P. M. T. Todd, Dr. W. F. Duguid, Mr. J. D. Paul, Mr. G. A. Clarke and Hon. C. P. Sinckler also spoke.

In reply the Prime Minister answered Miss Mottley, who rose several times on points of order, and the Resolution was agreed to without division. Orders Nos. 6 to 14, covering teachers, part-time officers, the remuneration of Members, Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, personal staff, pensioners' cost of living allowance, the Governor-General and the Judges, were each moved by the Prime Minister and passed without debate. On the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 16th December, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.