
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, December 16, 2008

Pursuant to the Adjournment, the House of Assembly met at the Parliament Buildings on December 16th, 2008.

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, Economic Affairs, Labour,
Civil Service and Energy)

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., LL.M.(Leic.), LL.B.
(Hons.) (Lond.), 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.)

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, M.B.B.S., B.Sc.,
(Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social
Security)

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. (Attorney
General and Minister of Home Affairs)

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, FCCA, C.A., (Minister of
Trade Industry and Commerce)

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, M.Ed., B.A., Ed.D. Dip.
Theology (Minister of Social Care, Constituency
Empowerment and Urban Development)

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 Social Care, Constituency and Urban
Development)

Hon. C.P. SINCKLER, M.Sc., B.A., (Minister of
Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business).

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

*Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan
Harewood.*

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, December
8, 2008.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move
that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of
Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, December 9, 2008,
which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, since assuming office in January 2008, the Democratic Labour Party Government has been committed to the philosophy of bringing Government closer to the people of Barbados from whom the source of our authority is derived. This new thrust is in an effort to reform, strengthen and expand the process of governance in the country, which has manifested itself in several ways.

Sir, from the quarterly national press meetings of the Prime Minister throughout the establishment and the ongoing work of the Committee on governance, on integrity legislation, freedom of information and more, this Administration is setting the platform for a serious overhaul of the current system of public Administration in governance in the country.

Sir, perhaps nowhere else in this process of reform is it expected to impact more than at the community level with the introduction, establishment and operation of the proposed Constituency Councils across the landscape of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, as has been said repeatedly and will no doubt be imparted again, the concept of Constituency Councils was born out of a fundamental need to broaden the scope of democracy and governance, encourage higher levels of civic partnership and, ultimately, to empower our citizens to identify issues that affect them at the community level, while working collaboratively to produce timely and lasting solutions.

Mr. Speaker, on the assumption of the responsibility of Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban and Rural Development, and buttressed by the exemplary work of my predecessor and mindful of the mandate of this Administration to pursue a strong, social development and empowerment agenda on behalf of the people of Barbados, I set as my first task, a complete review of the initiatives to establish Constituency Councils across Barbados.

Today, Sir, having completed such a review and having agreed an implementation plan for the council with the project advisory team and the staff of the Ministry, I am happy to announce to this Honourable House and the people of Barbados that we are ready to initiate Phase I of the Implementation of the Constituency Council Programme.

10.20 a.m.

Sir, in this regard, allow me to inform the House that following the extensive exercise of national consultation, discursive review and analysis, both internally and external of the Ministry, the Cabinet of Barbados has agreed to a framework model for the structure and operation of Constituency Councils.

The Cabinet also agreed that the aforementioned framework intended for the governance of the Councils should be forwarded to the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Council for preparation and finalisation of the appropriate draft Bill.

This has been done and the process is now at a very advanced stage. It is, therefore, my firm expectation that once leave is granted by the Cabinet, the draft legislation will be brought to this Parliament shortly.

Against this backdrop and timetable my Ministry will, starting from the first week of the New Year, initiate Phase One of the implementation of the Constituency Councils through the following:

1. A general informercial outlining the logistical arrangement governing the establishment of the Councils, their mandates and operations will be published in both major daily newspapers and carried on the broadcast media, to alert and educate members of the public of the process. Five (5) Zones have been established with six (6) Constituency Councils each, and the list Zones will be public.
2. A Public Notice will be issued to all community organisations, NGOs and similar organisations in the media, inviting them to engage in this process by participating in the registration exercise to update their details and facilitate the nomination of representative leaders to the Constituency Councils.
3. Once such information is received, and nominees are selected by the organisations, my Ministry will begin the process of constituting and subsequently launching the six (6) Constituency Councils which have been identified as: St. Michael North, St. Michael North West, Christ Church South, St. Philip South, St. James North and St. George South. These Constituencies were chosen on the basis of geographic spread and readiness factors relative to the functionality of the proposed hosting sites for the physical offices of the Councils. Both urban and rural sectors are represented.
4. These six (6) Councils will constitute Phase One of the programme and have been drawn one each from the five zones identified as Western, Southern, Eastern, Northern and Central Zones. In this pilot, an additional Council has been drawn from St. Michael, given the numerical population size

of the parish. Eventually, it is the intention of my Ministry to name each of the Zones after Barbadians who have made significant contributions to the previous local governance and vestry systems in Barbados. 5 While this process is ongoing, my Ministry will establish the Department responsible for Constituency Empowerment which will service the Constituency Councils. We will start with the basic human, financial and technical requirements and build out to full capacity as the programme unfolds. 6. The Ministry will also, as part of the intensive support process for the Councils, be organising a framework operation for a Volunteers Programme to assist the development and operations of the Councils.

Once we have set up the initial six (6) Councils, the Ministry will review the operations of this initial pilot over a period of three months, in order to ensure that any changes required to the proposed legislation and other arrangements are made. We will then indicate a schedule for launching all the remaining Constituency Councils. The first year of the operation of the Councils would be used as a period of monitoring and review.

Mr. Speaker, we are about to enter a very exciting and potentially ground-breaking phase of our democratic tradition. I am excited about this initiative. Indeed, I sense an air of expectancy not only across the Government, but especially among people who make up our communities. Sir, 2009 must be the year when we take the political revolution pioneered in the 1960s by the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow and the Democratic Labour Party, to a new and fundamentally higher level.

It will be the year in which the new Democratic Labour Party Government begins the process of giving Government back to the people of this country through a new and creative local governance process. I encourage all progressive-minded Barbadians, irrespective of political interest or personal preference to join us in this most forward-looking initiative as we seek to build new Pathways to Progress in this land.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders, Nos. 6,16,18,20, 42(5), 43 and 44 for the remainder of today'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

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

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE JUDGES REMUNERATION AND PENSIONS (CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND ALLOWANCES (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2008

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, last week, you will know that we concluded all of the other Resolutions relative to the negotiated package for public officers. Regrettably when the Resolutions were being called, this one relating to the Judges remuneration and Pensions was not called. Therefore, I simply would like to tidy that up this morning, by having this Resolution passed today and I so move it.

Dr. The Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: 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 of Supply, Mr. S.A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

10.30 a.m.

ORDER NO. 7

RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$1 059 110 FROM THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES 2008-2009 AS SHOWN IN THE SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 11 2008-2009 WHICH FORM THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION.

HEAD 15 CABINET OFFICE \$158 000

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, Head 15 relates to making provision for the appointment of a new Court of Appeal Judge to replace one who had retired. The

provision which is necessary is \$150 000 to meet the cost of a vehicle and \$8 000 to meet the cost of a one-off robing allowance.

I beg to move that Head 15 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 19 TREASURY \$150 000

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I am moving Head 19.

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

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

HEAD 52 MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND ENERGY \$1 051 110

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, Head 52 relates to the payment of utilities in respect of the Land Tax Department. The reason for the shortfall is the increase in electricity cost during the financial year. In respect of the Central Purchasing Department - transportation cost and again, utilities.

Sir, \$3 850 is to meet the cost of travel for the temporary post of Statistician II, and utilities in respect of the increase in the cost of utilities.

Sir, professional services under the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and Energy, and this relates to payment for consultants and for the automated Tax Administration and Systems. At the beginning of the financial year, the automated Tax Administration and Systems pProject had not allocated the total funds that had been requested. Therefore, on June 5, 2005, the Cabinet approved recommendations to conduct forensic audits at the following Government Departments: Inland Revenue.

The Customs and Excise Department, inclusive of the Value Added Tax Division.

The Licencing Authority.

This was considered necessary due to the high risk in relation to large amounts of cash. As a result of that, there had been incidents of fraud and we are carrying out a full forensic investigation into those entities which require supplementary provisions.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 52 stand part.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir. The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 59 THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, EMPOWERMENT, INNOVATION, TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, in the abundance of caution, the question is that we take Items 3(A) and 3(B) in Committee, as proposed by the acting Honourable Leader of the House.

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

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Empowerment, Innovation, Trade, Industry and Commerce, had to request a supplementary provision to assist in meeting expenditure to the completion of the Financial Year for 2008/2009.

The sum of \$88 264 is required to cover certain expenditure for the remainder of the financial year. They are for personal emoluments, National Insurance contributions for the balance of the financial year, the payment of salaries, allowances for substitute staff of about 30 persons when officers go on leave, and when we have unplanned expenditure; salaries for those persons who have left on maternity leave; to hire an economist, when one of our economists went on leave; a full salary for a clerical officer, when the substantial holder of that post also went out on leave; monies for the post of a stenographer/typist, who was transferred to the Ministry, following the reassignment of Ministerial responsibilities; to pay an Administrative Officer II, who was reinstated to the Ministry, following the reassignment of the Ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman, sums of \$88 624 are therefore required to cover those costs under Accounting Code 102 and Accounting Code 103 National Insurance.

10.40 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 59 stand part.

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

The question that Head 59 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 58

MINISTRY OF FAMILY, YOUTH, SPORTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT \$109 760 00

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Hon. Dr. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Family, Youth, Sports and the Environment is seeking a supplementary provision under Head 58 for what was then the Environment Division and is now the Ministry of Environment, Water and Drainage.

This sum of \$109 760 00 represents the increase in utilities across various Departments of the Ministry of the Environment. Additionally, an amount of \$2 560 is requested to pay for petrol for the vehicles of the various Departments of that Ministry.

Mr. Chairman, the Environmental Protection Department was relocated to the National Union of Public Workers' Headquarters this year and, in so doing, they incurred expenses not only of relocating, but they also had to pay for its own electricity, which was not the case before, so that would not have been budgeted in the Estimates for the current year. The maintenance of the property was not budgeted for as well because that was not an expense that was incurred prior to this move.

Sir, this Supplementary we are requesting for Head 58 in the amount of \$109 760 is for the payment of all of these fees, utilities, electricity and the new maintenance charges for the various departments in the new Ministry of Environment, Water and Drainage.

I beg to move that Head 58 stand part.

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

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, we are in an era where matters of the environment are almost paramount, not only in international affairs, but here within the Caribbean.

Mr. Chairman, we would no doubt have heard in recent times in the Media and even on the Floor of this Honourable House, reference to the concept of greening. This concept of greening has to do with the reduction and elimination of those chemicals and substances which, as they traverse the stratosphere, produce deleterious effects on the environment.

It is therefore clear that in this era the Ministry of the Environment cannot be an ordinary department, but must be a ministry in its own right to tackle the whole problems of environmental degradation, pollution, deforestation and, certainly, matters to do with climate change.

Mr. Chairman, I will start with the one on climate change. There can be no doubt that with the effect of global warming, we have seen some severe weather systems in the last 10 or so years, but we have also seen some very unpredictable weather patterns, some of which make it difficult to plant.

Sir, this year alone, much as the rainfall that came our way was welcomed in most instances, so unpredictable was the total amount of rainfall that some farmers were adversely impacted on in that at the time and in the season where they would ordinarily plant, there were instances of flooding which caused the seeds to be washed away and which caused production in agriculture to suffer very gravely. The extent to which the weather is part of the uncertainties that confront agricultural production is a matter of concern to all Honourable Members on This Side.

Agriculture is often met by what we call risks and uncertainties, meaning that farmers are faced with some challenges which, in the absence of proper encouragement and incentives, will see their farmers' effort come to grief. Therefore, we must encourage every step that can be taken to protect the interest of farmers.

Since 1995, our farmers have been playing an interesting role. I am not here speaking of sugar farmers who run sugar plantations, I am speaking of those many farmers who produce food. It does not surprise me in the least, Mr. Chairman, that since 1995 and continuing, local food production is now outstripping the production of sugar. This is against a background where farmers are not only affected by the weather, but where farmers are confronted by spiralling costs, especially the cost of feed and other running costs.

Speaking of the whole question of global warming and its effects, there can be no doubt, Mr. Chairman, that we are very much a coastal state without anything called a genuine hinterland. Why do I mention that we are a coastal State? We are low-lying. The seas surround us and much capital has been invested along the coast, especially in hotels, condominiums and restaurants.

Mr. Chairman, if the effects of global warming and the threat of Kick-in-Jenny are anything to go by, then we must strengthen our resolve both as a Parliament and as a people to make sure that we are adequately prepared for the worst that could happen through global warming.

Mr. Chairman, if the sea levels rise to a substantial degree, that sea level rise can undermine and compromise billions of dollars in investments along our coast in a culture where tourism is extremely important. Much as I am saying what I am putting forward, I am not critical of what is being brought here. I am encouraging and admonishing the authorities to redouble every effort to do with this whole question of the environmental challenges that face us.

10.50 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, I am not aware that within the school system, many teachers at both primary and secondary levels, stress to students the importance of the preservation of the environment. Forty years ago, when we spoke about the preservation of the environment, we used to speak of trying to prevent pollution, when pollution was very much dumping garbage anywhere and not putting away waste.

Sir, nowadays environmental matters are far more all-embracing and all-encompassing than ordinary pollution. Environmental matters go even to the use of fuels in our system, and the extent to which some of these fuels are also contributors to the whole question of environmental matters.

Mr. Chairman, internationally, the big world has been slow to respond to the calls of 95 per cent of the countries to do something about global warming. Certainly, countries like Australia and the United States of America, in recent times, have signalled that their coal industry is important to them, and that they are not going to do anything about the effects of the use of coal, until things reach crisis proportion. Sir, one of the ironies of this is that we in Barbados, despite our internal concerns about the environment, must be aware of the fact that in the international world, there has become the aphorism that the polluter should pay.

Mr. Chairman, Barbados cannot contribute not even 1 per cent to total global warming and total global fallout, but Barbados can be severely affected where others in this world so pollute and so undermine the environment for it to impact on Barbados. Sir, what we need here is a core of Barbadians who are dedicated to the question of environmental preservation and environmental enhancement.

Sir, a number of hotels have designated themselves as Green Hotels, meaning that they will do their utmost to

green Barbados but at the same time, every Honourable Member here knows that between May and June, there exists a nervousness among Barbadians that if hurricanes or storms were to come our way, that trees can present a threat to chattel houses, in particular, and other houses as well. Mr. Chairman, therefore, what do we find? We find a situation where we both need the trees, while, at this time, the trees can be a threat, if there are storms and hurricanes.

Mr. Chairman, one reason, of course, where the trees are important for us, despite our small size, is that they can act as what we call carbon syncs that would ease the full pressure that can be placed on the environment, as far as the effects of global warming are concern.

I think the time has come when at the United Nations level, through the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) for us in Barbados to work closely with them to ensure that we do our best for the environment. It would be a source of pleasure to every Barbadian to know that the Honourable Member, who now sits in the Other Place, was given an award for her contribution to matters regarding the environment, in the same league as Mr. Al Gore. At the same time, I trust and hope that those bigger countries that are yet to come fully on board when it comes to proper environmental enhancement, would do so as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman, there is encouragement. In talking about the big world, Sweden, Germany and others they have set out to ensure that they reduce the effects of the deleterious carbons on the environment. Sir, we can learn a lot from Sweden and Germany when it comes to environmental protection.

Sir, in this era of rapidly developing technology, and with the free passage of information, the Government of Barbados should avail itself of whatever information there can be to assist our environment. This Government could also seek help internationally to ensure that we have the resources, along with ourselves, to carry forward the programme.

Mr. Chairman, there was a time when there was something called the "Global Environmental Facility", I think that Barbados qualified for assistance there. I think we should pursue that Facility. I think that we should do what the Swedes do, that is, to work with the youngsters. In Sweden, the youngsters do not necessarily travel in cars, buses, et cetera, if they could avoid it. They use bicycles, skates, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman, in talking about Sweden, they have developed buses which run on natural gas, and in a country like Barbados, where we are producing some level of natural gas - I do not know the quantum of our reserves - we can still access natural gas, even if our reserves are not

that high. In an era where we are environmentally conscious, if natural gas is seen as a clean fuel, it should be put to better use.

Mr. Chairman, it was a source of some comfort when I heard that a public officer recently said that if you take out a particular chemical from gasoline and petroleum and put in a type of alcohol, you could come up with a mix which is ultimately going to be more environmentally friendly. Mr. Chairman, as we look at this, I have added my contribution, as a person who is interested in making sure that posterity does not find itself with a bad inheritance.

We work with our youths. We educate them in the schools. We keep programmes for them to be environmentally conscious, we award them prizes and such like. We ensure that the mass media is on board, and we start at various levels in the community to ensure that we are very much on track in terms of the prevention of environmental degradation.

Mr. Chairman, finally our seas. From time to time, some patriotic Barbadians would go into the sea and dive and bring up things that had no right being there. Sir, first of all, nobody should dump in the sea.

Secondly, those large ocean-going liners that pass through here should not dump in the sea.

Thirdly, the Caribbean Sea should be singled out as a special environmental area that needs protection. In addition, if our seas become as polluted as some others I have seen in this world, it could have a serious effect on the health of Barbadians who go there.

Mr. Chairman, there are many Barbadians who go to the sea for therapeutic reasons. Sir, a lot of these old people who go for therapeutic reasons, are now being followed and emulated by younger people who feel that because the old people have been going to the beach for 60 years, if they, as 20-year olds, were to go to the beach for some time, they would reach 80 years too. Therefore, I am pleading that our people, as Barbadians, be allowed to go to clean seas and beaches.

Of course, I must also say that in circumstances where tourism is so important, and where some tourists come for the sea, sand and the fun that goes with the sea and sand, the question of polluting the sea should be halted, and firm action should be taken against those responsible for polluting our seas and oceans.

Mr. Chairman, we also have to be alert to the reality of something called leachate migration.

11.00 a.m.

Sir, leachate migration can affect farming by polluting the lands on which farmers operate. Leachate migration can pollute soils of one foot deep or less. leachate migration can end up causing a loss of production in agriculture as well as its potential for reaching the seas and our waterways and polluting them.

Mr. Chairman, with those few remarks, I am heartened that there is going to be a strengthening of our approach to environmental management but, be assured, Sir, that when our Party, This Side, held office between 1994 and 2008, we were very much on board with the question of the protection of the environmental.

Sir, very often what happens is that governance and Government represent a continuum and what one Party has started ought to be continued by its successor Party especially where there is justification in doing so, based on enlightened policies that were in place before the coming into office of a succeeding Party.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Chairman, the newly formed Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, certainly is not a continuum or continuation of anybody's policy, but is one that has been established by this Administration as being necessary to deal with all those challenges that we now face within the Ministry of the Environment. I must agree with much of what has been said and the challenges that we face in Barbados, particularly with Barbados being a small island developing State, and our welfare being linked to much of our oceanic and coastal activity.

Sir, I would also like to assure the Members and the public that the Ministry continues to work with our international organisations, including the global environmental facility, particularly with the youth of Barbados because it is them that we need to impress upon the importance of preserving our environment.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry continues to work rapidly to make sure that legislation in the areas of the environment, which have not been addressed for many years, will finally be addressed so that we can be on target to protecting our environment.

Mr. Chairman, as I move this Resolution, we are mindful that this year has been challenging for everyone, all budgets, residential, corporate and Government budgets. Sir, that increase in utilities and so on is what brings this Resolution to the Floor. It has meant that all Barbadians have had to be conscious of their expenditure and they can reduce wastage.

Sir, even as Barbadians prepare for Xmas, which is coming next week, I want to urge Barbadians, as they enjoy their Xmas, eat drink and make merry, to be mindful of the fact that fossil fuels in the world are in short supply and how they can reduce their use of fossil fuels.

Sir, of course, this is the season of the bright lights, and Xmas tree lights may stay on all night long, although we are always reminded that they should not stay on all night long, not only for fuel reasons but also because it is not the safest thing to leave electrical gadgets going all night with the plugs on. Sir, the decorations all around the House; the baking that has to be done and, of course, the driving up and down into town and the long lines of traffic. We know that at Xmas traffic becomes worse than it can be during the year.

Mr. Chairman, just to urge Barbadians that as they enjoy Xmas to be mindful how they can reduce wastage and their dependence on fossil fuels, not only at Xmas, but certainly, into the New Year.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 58, stand part.

The question that Head 58 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

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

Hon. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, the matter for consideration is for a request of a Supplementary of \$20 000 to meet cost associated with some added expenditure for some acting allowances. It is actually going to the 102 line, which is "Other Personal Emoluments". We had a situation at the Ministry of Tourism, where a number of senior officers were on leave, in one case it was maternity leave, and we had to have an officer from another Ministry come over in a senior capacity and so, those additional funds are required to meet that unanticipated expenditure, as well as some additional acting allowances that would be required for the rest of the year.

Sir, what is required today, basically, is just \$20 000, which would take that particular Vote from just under 200 000 to just over 200 000, which would allow us to meet the cost of these additional acting allowances.

Sir, therefore, I so move and ask that Head 55 stand part.

The question that Head 55 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, seconded by Hon. F.J. STUART, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of three money Resolutions in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

11.10 a.m.

On the separate motions of Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, seconded by Hon. F.J. STUART, the Resolutions were read a first and second time and passed.

ORDER NO. 6 – RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO RAISE ONE BILLION DOLLARS BY THE ISSUE OF TREASURY BILL, TAX RESERVE CERTIFICATES AND TAX REFUND CERTIFICATES TO PAY OFF, AT MATURITY, BILLS ALREADY ISSUED AND OUTSTANDING.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, when I dealt previously with the Special Loans Act and the Local Loans Act, I was not able at that time to bring this Resolution which relates to the Treasury Bills and Tax Certificate Act.

The current limit is \$700 million, and at September 30, 2008, the balance outstanding was \$698.8 million. Therefore, the leeway is only \$1.2 million. Therefore, Government would be unable to undertake any further short-term borrowings under the Treasury Bills and Tax Certificate Act. Therefore, the approval of Parliament is being sought to increase the limit to \$1 billion.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, there is only one essential point that I would like to raise on this matter, similar to the Honourable Member for St. John who raised one point. It is related to what I would like to term "crowding out". What exactly is crowding out? Crowding out is when the Government makes a decision to raise money by way of Treasury Bills, in this case, on the local market, a

significant amount of this money is made available to investors, but is used up by the Government offering Treasury Bills.

What does that mean? That means that if a hotelier wants to borrow to build a hotel, he cannot access the money because there is no money left in the kitty, since the Government has already accessed a significant amount in Treasury Bills.

If somebody wants to build a mall to employ people, the funds cannot be accessed because the Government has already withdrawn a significant portion of the money available for investment in Treasury Bills. If somebody wants to build an industry or enhance an industry, or build a plant to manufacture something in this country, they cannot now because the Government has made a decision to offer some \$700 million in Treasury Bills, drying up the liquidity of the country while that money now becomes unavailable for investment.

Sir, if we are to put this country to work, money must be available for investment, not only money in the Government's coffers, but also money in investors' coffers. This is important. In a publication in the media on Thursday, December 11, 2008, the Governor of the Central Bank indicated that there will be a downturn in arrivals and a downturn in expenditure in the Tourist Industry between 4 per cent at the minimum to a maximum of 20 per cent. Even if we take the average of 12 per cent, the medium downturn, because I thought it was quite a large band, from 4 per cent to 20 per cent, access to foreign exchange would be a problem.

In addition, the Government of this country takes up \$700 million in Treasury Bills. As a result, access to foreign exchange will not be the only problem, but now access to funds is going to be a problem. When you join the two together with limited access to foreign exchange and funds, where are we going to get the money to invest in this country to put people to work?

Sir, further, we are hearing that instead of more people getting work, more people are being sent home and we anticipate this will get worse. This is what some economists would consider a perfect storm, a calamity waiting to happen. Instead of the Government of this country apply forward-thinking and progressive measures to increase and enhance employment, we have seen, yet again, a retroactive step to take money out of the hands of investors.

Sir, this is similar to what is now happening in the United States. We are making things worse. In the United States the problem is access to credit. Now, when the Government of this country decides to take \$700 million away from the people who want to get credit to invest,

there is a continued deepening and lengthening of the recession. The percentage and length is deepening by these retrogressive steps taken by this Government.

We need to correct this matter and we need to correct it now. The Government needs to rethink what they are doing. It needs to reverse all of the inflationary measures that were taken in the Budget. It needs to rethink this idea of taking \$700 million away from investors.

Sir, the Government cannot do it all. Similarly, the Government cannot provide every housing solution for the thousands of people that want houses. The Government cannot provide every job.

11.20 a.m.

The private sector is the driving force of this economy, and this is what we have to encourage, not take money away from investors; not dry up the liquidity, so that people cannot get access to funds to build the investment things that they want to do, the factories to invest in enhancing this country. Sir, that is what we need, not a government that is taking away and "take" and "take" and "take", because this is all we are hearing.

Mr. Speaker, whenever we come to this Parliament, the Government takes more, takes more out of your pocket, takes more for tax, and takes more from credit. This is a take Government; take, take, take. Sir, we want to hear give, give, give. Sir, this is not any pathway to prosperity. This is a pathway to a penniless country.

This is a pathway to poverty by an impoverished government; a government impoverished of ideas, impoverished of ways to take this country forward, and that is why we are here today, to represent the people of this country.

Sir, I only had one simple point to make on this matter. I have not only made the point but I will wait for your submission. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South suggested that he has greater than one point to make. Sir, if he does not now get up and make a point, I will be more than disappointed, because the Minister of Nothing has now come and suggested that he has a point, so I wait for him, and I give way.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, just a few questions for the Minister of Finance. I think it is normal

when the House is being asked to agree to these matters for some basic data to be provided to the House and the public of Barbados. I trust that the Minister of Finance can do that in his wrap-up for us.

The reality is that we are seeking in this Resolution to increase the limit to raise \$1 billion by the issue of Treasury Bills, Tax Reserve Certificates and Tax Refund Certificates. It would be useful for this House and for the public of Barbados to know what is the out-turn position, as well at the beginning of December. Equally, what is the daily status of the foreign reserves and the unemployment statistics which ought to have been out since the middle of November?

I ask for these things, Mr. Speaker, because on the last occasion that the House met, I made it clear that the Opposition recognises that Barbados will face challenging times and even more challenging times next year. We are not going to oppose for the sake of opposing but, equally, we believe that there are certain things, which ought to be done.

Sir, earlier in the year, I spoke about the need to mop us some of the excess liquidity. The truth is that some of the liquidity is not there in the same way that it was in the earlier part of the year. Barbados would have benefitted significantly from shareholders of RBTT and BS&T from the sale of their shares.

Sir, there is no doubt that the Government has to take the lead in relation to any stimulus package, but I think the point being made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West is that even in so doing, room must still be left for those investors who have the heart, and who are prepared to take on challenges in this environment.

I think you will find, as sure as the Government will, that there will be persons who want, with Government guarantees or Government contracts, through some form of private/public partnership to be able to play their role. Sir, by the same token, when that happens, there has to be liquidity for them to do so.

When other projects have been done in the past, the international capital markets were available for persons to go to readily. This is not the case anymore. Even within the Region, while there is liquidity, the truth is that most of the regional banks are, in fact, proceeding very cautiously, to ensure that there is no replication within the Caribbean of the credit crisis and credit crunch that has taken place in western Europe and in north America.

I say this, however, to reinforce the point that we really would like to know what is the outturn position, as at the beginning of this month. How is the Government's cash flow holding up? Are there any concerns in relation to

revenue that was anticipated, or has there been significant tax receipts from the VAT in relation to the increase in energy prices? Sir, we are still way above the prices of January.

Sir, when the Estimates came to this House in April, the price of diesel was \$1.46. Sir, even with five reductions, it is \$1.99 and 15 per cent of \$1.99 is more than 15 per cent of \$1.46, and it went as high as \$2.57.

Equally, there were revenue raising measures which the Prime Minister announced in his Budget that some have been implemented and some have not. Where do we stand in relation to Government's revenue, and where do we stand in relation to Government's expenditure to date, as of the beginning of December?

Sir, we are also definitely interested in the unemployment statistics for the Third Quarter because we need to know to what extent, and at what scale should the stimulus package come now?

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South has spoken twice in this House about a stimulus package. It seems divorced from what was set up in relation to the plan which was given by the Committee that the Prime Minister set up, when he said that he wanted a war plan. I think he may have received a development plan as opposed to a war plan.

Therefore, we also want to know from the Prime Minister, when does he anticipate that he will address the country, as I am sure that he will, in relation to the package of measures that are necessary to stabilise Barbados' economic performance, and to stem the loss of jobs, to contain inflation.

Sir, what is more worrisome for next year, of greater concern, is to protect the balance of payments, particularly given the absence of the private capital inflows in the last few months of the year, which very often helped us to bridge what we earned and what we spent in terms of imports. In those circumstances, I think that the House would benefit significantly from that information being provided, out-turn figures, unemployment statistics, balance of payments position and when the country is likely to see, in one place, the stimulus package.

I am told that the Social Partners would have met last week with representatives of the Government. When are we likely to see in one place, the package which the Government is asking the people of Barbados to support and subscribe, as they seek to stabilise this economy and to stem jobs?

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Asides.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I did not characterise this as an economic debate, and I do not propose to enter into one today.

Sir, last week I gave the full statistics, if people were listening, on the fiscal out-turn, up to that time in the salaries debate. I responded at the end of my presentation by speaking about the stimulus package and so on. The week before that, we dealt with local loans and special loans, and once again, I gave the out turn. Sir, that is simply a mask for the horrendous presentation that preceded it. That is all that it is. That is an act of redemption because, Sir, the first statement made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East when the Lehman's Bank collapsed - I was not in Barbados, I happened to be in London at the time - was that the Government needed to mop up the liquidity, raise a substantial amount of money to be called, I think, a wage stabilisation fund. Okay? That there was all this liquidity from the sale of all these bonds in Barbados, and that we were to mop it up.

11.30 a.m.

Sir, anybody would believe that the Government of Barbados went yesterday, based on the presentation made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, and borrowed \$700 million.

What we are talking about is a process of borrowing by previous Governments. The speech made by the Honourable Member for St. James North should have been taken to heart by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. Successive Governments have borrowed under this legislation. The previous Government amended this legislation to provide for new instruments for borrowing.

We did not go yesterday and mop up \$700 million in liquidity. We did not go last week and mop up \$20 million. It has been close to the limit for some time. It is now \$1.2 million away from the \$700 million limit. All we have done is to increase the limit to facilitate future borrowings.

The stimulus package that I am being asked to talk to the country about, we have already announced it. We announced our stimulus package two months before the President of the United States of America announced his.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It is a pity that you do not read the newspaper on a Friday because somebody writing on your behalf knows what the stimulus package is because he criticised it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is that on my behalf?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, not you, Sir, I know you read the newspaper.

Mr. SPEAKER: Oh.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The principal financial spokesman of that political party knows what the package is, and he is not even in the House. He was not at any of the consultations, but he critiqued the package and said it should not be more spending, it should be tax breaks. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East does not know what the stimulus package is. That is all fluff and puff, calculated to mislead...

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. If I saw a stimulus package or if the Government had presented a stimulus package, not only me, the country would know. The reality is that the Government has come with a series of ad hoc things across the way, but yet is still waiting for a Social Partnership plan according to the Honourable Member for St. John last week.

In fact, he defended himself and said: "Why are you looking at me when you should be looking at the Social Partnership which you have trumped?" That is what the Honourable Member said in here.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member for St. John.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I only speak one language and I try to be very specific about my use of the English language and my understanding of it. There is a difference between Government's stimulus package and the National Economic Programme that we are undertaking in Barbados to deal with the crisis. Those are two separate things.

In the equation, is the input of the private sector, what they are doing? In the equation is that what the workers are doing? Government's stimulus package has an impact on them, but I constantly say that Government cannot act alone, so we have said to the Social Partners, this is our stimulus package.

We brought Supplementaries here. We have said to the public what our stimulus package is. The Special Working Group has said, we think your stimulus package should be in the order of X percentage of the Gross Domestic Product. That recommendation relates to Government's stimulus package. Mr. Chairman, are we now living in Barbados in which only the Government must act, that the private sector...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You want to redo your speech as usual. By points of order, you are trying to undo what you said.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Prime Minister may be able to bully Members on That Side, but he cannot bully me. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Government's stimulus package represents not just what Government is doing but it also sets the target for what can be done by the other sectors.

We have never said that we do not expect the private sector or the unions to play their part. The reality is that there is an absence of leadership from this Government in relation to leading Barbados out of the difficulties. I am now more worried than I was when I came in here this morning because if what came to the House as a series of supplementaries for the building of school fences, and for a few roads, is meant to constitute this Government's stimulus package, then the public of Barbados needs to worry this Christmas.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. John.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, how could somebody with \$3.5 million in personal reserves be worried about an economic crisis? I have people who do not even have \$35 a month to send their children to school that we had to give to. I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church West say that we have not given out anything.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is not going to confuse me, and not by points of order. If she had a speech to deliver, she should have been in her seat when I delivered the presentation and be ready to reply. This is an old battle strategy of putting certain people on the frontline.

There were battles taking place before in the Civil War where black men were put on the frontline to take all the bullets. That is not what is happening here. It is a little different, but people are being put on the frontline to take all the bullets.

In the last three years, prior to the previous Government being thrown out of office, in every debate in this House, they quoted Errol Barrow's position on borrowing, which he took very early in his political career, not the final position he took prior to 1986 when he quoted the "Debt Trap", the book written by Cheryl Payer.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East constantly quoted it when we did the National Strategic Plan. All those who want to criticise Government for borrowing need to read Errol Barrow. All those who are against Government's borrowing need to understand that future generations can pay, that we have to invest now for future generations.

Mr. Chairman, we have a crisis upon us now and Honourable Members on That Side are railing against Government borrowing. The extent of our borrowing in relation to that \$700 million, which is simply a limit, would be very inconsiderable compared to what was borrowed by the previous Administration.

Sir, it is that kind of intellectual gyration that has created such a wide distance between the Honourable Member for Christ Church West and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East in this debate. As he was speaking, I could see the considerable embarrassment written on the face of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East because everything he said systematically destroyed what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has been saying for the past four years, and said in the past three months.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am totally confused about it, but I am not confused about the strategy that the Government is pursuing. The only person who is confused is the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and she is not in a position financially to be affected by this crisis based on what was presented to this House in the Budget debate.

11.40 a.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member cannot speak of whatever financial position I am in, to be able to affect or not affect. I wish I were in a position to say about his, since he has not yet, a year later, released his own declaration of assets.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we put our position to the private sector. We stimulated the tourism budget by an additional \$10 million and we are in close collaboration. We went to the United Kingdom and immediately met with those persons who provide airlift to the Region.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central ensured that West Jet came here, to ensure that we have additional airlift out of Canada. Last week the Honourable Member went and met with American Airlines, to ensure that our position in relation to American Airlines is solidified.

There is major restructuring taking place in the Board of the Barbados Tourism Authority, which will ensure that its resources and its work are much more efficiently delivered. Persons at Invest Barbados set out immediately, met in every major capital with the principal diplomatic investment and other entities working on its behalf. Sir, this is unprecedented in the history of this country. They were given three specific objectives:

1. In relation to our investment targets; 2. In relation to the Diaspora and how we could enhance remittances and enhance investments by Barbadians living overseas; and 3. In relation to our Philanthropy Project, which would encourage high network individuals to support developmental initiatives in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Barbados has also looked at its options arising out of the Special Working Group Report in relation to accessing stabilisation funds that may be available, both from international institutions and in markets in the Region which are liquid. That is the fourth thing that has been done.

The Government then identified a capital works programme, which included roads and the construction of two new office complexes for the Government. The Government further engaged in a housing programme which, for the past 10 months, we have seen at least 700 housing solutions being started in this country. There has been a variety of housing solutions where, in some cases, people were able to buy existing properties they were renting.

There was also the Housing Every Last Person Programme. All of those programmes have been undertaken. Sir, only last week we were discussing how we could increase the labour intensiveness of the housing programme so as to ensure that Barbadians would get jobs.

Mr. Speaker, there are other areas of additional expenditure that Government will be undertaking as part of its budget, to ensure that we make a contribution to economic activity in this country. Mr. Speaker, we have had the co-operation of the major sectors in Barbados, and I am grateful to them. Sir, the only person who has problems with them, where every time those persons talk they want to see the plan, are the Honourable Members on That Side, whether in This Place or in the Other Place. Sir, the plan is clear and apparent to all. When people leave Barbados and go to other countries in the Caribbean, they say that they wish they had the level of commitment, unity of purpose and the focus that Barbados has. As I said, before the President Elect in the United States of America said what he was going to do as a stimulus programme, we had already identified exactly the same kinds of initiatives to provide a fiscal stimulus.

Sir, we are acutely aware that the source of the problem is external to Barbados and, therefore, it does not make sense blowing in the wind. We also have to monitor and make sure that every key policy initiative that we undertake is going to have some return, that it is going to have some impact in the economy. Therefore, our focus has been to stabilise the situation in relation to investment.

Mr. Speaker, if there is any concern by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, who is a contractor, it should be that. Instead of some of the major projects being foreign-financed, our local banks in Barbados, out of a sense of national duty, have opted to come forward and see whether they could finance some of those projects so that they would continue. Sir, that is a positive development.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: But that is not the issue. Nobody has raised that issue. That would be so if the Governor of the Central Bank or if people in the banking system had said there is a shortage of liquidity. I am not saying to you that liquidity is tightening, of course, it would. It is tightening everywhere, but if you are saying that Government should not borrow at all, in a situation of tightened liquidity, then...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, regarding the unemployment statistics, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East always gets them before me

anyway. Therefore, if there is a delay, the Honourable Member has to check with her source. The Honourable Member had them before me on the last three occasions. The Honourable Member has to check with the person who normally gives them to her, and find out if there is a delay.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not know because that is a technical matter and I do not meddle in relation to technical matters. There are technicians employed by the Government of Barbados who are to do their work, and I expect the highest quality of work from them, on a timely basis. That is all I can say.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East gets those statistics before me and was getting them since January. The Honourable Member was able to tell the public what the rates were before I, as the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, was able to tell the public.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by saying I get those statistics before him. Sir, however, the fact remains that however I get them, he gets them also and the public of Barbados wants them. I am not the only person who wants them, so the Honourable Member could obsess himself with whether or not I have them. The reality is that, as Prime Minister, and the Minister of Finance of this country, the Honourable Member has an obligation to ensure that the public receives them. End of story.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, all I am doing is appealing to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, as she has done on three previous occasions, to release the statistics that she has been given.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I do not have any statistics to release, neither have I called for an investigation as to how the Leader of the Opposition gets them before me. I am saying, if the Honourable Member has a duty to the public, my duty is no greater than that of the Honourable Member. Therefore, this idea of getting up in here every week and saying the statistics are three weeks late, when the Honourable Member already has them in her possession....

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member has them, she could release them to the public. The Honourable Member has as much a public duty as I do. The Honourable Member's duty is no less than mine in that regard.

11.50 a.m.

If there are unemployment statistics in Barbados that are creating problems for the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, we could have a debate on employment in this country but when we have the debate, it has to be a full debate. It has to include the migration policies of the previous Administration.

Sir, let us start there; which went further than our commitments under the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, which have stretched our schools to the limit; which have created problems to our Immigration Department in relation to the authenticity of documents; have created problems in housing in which the Town Planner was able to determine that people were living in pig pens in this country, and in the City and also in St. Philip. Sir, let us start to talk about that.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I do not know what part of St. Philip it was. Sir, when we have the discussion on employment in this country, we are going to have a full discussion. We are also going to have a discussion on the methodology for the determination of those statistics which everybody has criticised, and yet nothing was done to challenge the basis and the authenticity of those statistics. Sir, we can have that debate, but we are going to put everything into the debate.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I am saying to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to release those statistics to the public. In my view, it is a grave dereliction of duty for the Honourable Member to withhold information...

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House and imputing improper motive to me now.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: You did not feel for yourself when you had nothing to do.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Sir, once again, the Honourable Member is imputing an improper motive that I drew a salary under false pretense by having nothing to do. Sir, if I did that, then are we raising the dead in the Honourable Member for St. Philip West because he has less than nothing to do and has been deliberately foisted with that by the Honourable Member for St. John? In fact, I feel the comment has only come to embarrass the Honourable Member for St. Philip West today.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not getting into to that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please do not. Let us proceed.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, when the Honourable Member was idling for the past three years of the Barbados Labour Party Administration and the major Ministry of Attorney-General was taken from her and given to a junior member who had just come into the House of Assembly, and was elevated to silk in record time but, Sir, there is nothing wrong with that because it is a fact.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member must not mislead the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: In what way, Honourable Member?

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: If the Honourable Member wants to speak about the Honourable Member for St. Michael West in his demotion, then he must do so, but do not seek to use me as a platform to send messages to his own Members from St. Philip West and St. Michael North West.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. John, please continue.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to bother to go down that road anymore because the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The electorate made their decision and made it very resoundingly in the last Elections. Sir, Honourable Members on the Other Side cannot get used to that.

In fact, their biggest failing, to my mind, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is their inability to grapple with the fact... if you reflect back on what the Honourable Member said at her Annual Conference, it was not a deliberate act by the electorate. That is just tiredness and the aura of change that had enveloped a government that has been there for three terms, but the people did not want to get rid of them.

Sir, that is the perspective from which the Honourable Member speaks all the time. Sir, that is when they are not saying, "money", as if Barbadians are only influenced and motivated by one thing. The famous speech by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North that the only thing that influenced people was this. He constantly says it in here. Sir, both statements are terrible reflections on the people of this country and the voters of Barbados.

Sir, it is not my job to tell the Honourable Member how to be a good Leader of the Opposition. Whether she does or not, the result is going to be the same when the time comes. We can predict it, seal it in an envelope and

put it in this desk and open it the day after the next Election.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in this particular exercise, as I have said, the public has been kept fully abreast of the initiatives of this Government. Sir, we will continue to keep the people of this country abreast of what we are and have been doing. Sir, a lot of what we have had to do has also been conditioned by what was previously determined.

I am saying that there was never any legislation put in place for public/private sector projects to deal with the BOLT arrangements and how they are financed. Sir, a lot of Government's activity had to be brought to book, which previously the other Government negligently refused to bring to book.

We had to accommodate the borrowing that facilitated the subsidy in relation to fuel prices and we need to look at what is happening in the rest of the Caribbean in relation to the management of their respective economies, and where Barbados is today in relation to this crisis. Sir, we are not saying there will not be challenges ahead, but nobody can accuse this Government of failing to do all that was necessary in the circumstances to stave off the worst effects of this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I find it alarming that there are people who can advise the Government of Barbados how to deal with a crisis, not generated in Barbados, that economists, who have doctorates, Nobel laureates, all kinds of qualification, degrees and all kinds of qualifications in economics are in the United States of America every day on television saying that they do not know the nature of this recess; that they do not know the length of this recess and that they do not know the depth or extent of this recession. Therefore, the policy responses by Barbados have to be different.

Mr. Speaker, this is the worst economic depression since the 1930s. Sir, 9/11 heralded their counter-cyclical policies as being so terrific. Sir, we were actually told in a debate in this House that there were economies in the Caribbean that would become basket cases as a result of 9/11. Sir, that prediction was made from this very Chair and that Barbados would be the only one that would survive. Sir, every single economy in the Caribbean survived and prospered after 9/11.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Exactly, but we were made to believe that 9/11 was such a big economic crisis.

12:00 noon

Sir, what we are facing now is not a security crisis. It is not a one-off event. It is an economic crisis that because of the way in which the world has globalised, the integration of financial markets reaches into almost every capital of the world.

Sir, other than a gentleman called Peter Skift, who predicted this two years ago, and made recommendations, one of which is very salutary, he said that whatever happens whenever the world comes out of this, as long as stupid policy responses are not implemented we would be able to have a correction that should lead to some prosperity for humankind for a while, except that we are therefore now faced by other challenges like climate change, environmental and other crises which are equally as significant. At least in relation to the correction of the market cycle and those challenges, this period may be salutary and helpful.

Sir, rest assured that the people of Barbados need to understand that we are focussed on the kinds of economic activity, packages, whatever you wish to describe it as, war plan, that will ensure the survival of the Barbados economy. There is nothing that I can promise at this stage except we will work every day to ensure that we will mitigate the impact of it.

Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East wants me to be as reckless as to say that there will be absolutely no job losses in Barbados, simply because I can later on be held to some standard in relation to statistics that they published that everybody knew was wrong, I am not going to say that.

I am going to say that there will be challenges for Barbados in the year 2009, and those challenges are going to come from a multiplicity of sources. They will impact almost every area of economic activity and they will also impact our social programmes. That is why we have to make decisions now to protect the future of Barbados.

I also want to say this as an addendum to what I said previously. It is a point that the Deputy Prime Minister and I were discussing this week. In 1991, the workers of Barbados made the biggest sacrifice in relation to the stabilization of this economy. People in the private sector need to understand that it is their responsibility to acknowledge that contribution.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East talking about the Democratic Labor Party putting the workers on the frontline of the adjustment, as if the private sector made no contribution to that at all. It was only Government that put workers on the frontline. We were facing an economic crisis then. Everything should be done in this environment, if not the Social Partnership means nothing to ensure that workers are protected in this

environment and that arrangements will be made, even where there is necessary restructuring to ensure that Barbadians are kept in employment. That is vital. It has been one of our principal concerns. That is one of the reasons we entered into the discussions with Cable and Wireless, and why in the Social Partnership we have been talking with our tourism partners. The focus has been on jobs.

Sir, in the Bahamas, a country that has a similar standard of living to Barbados, Paradise Island sent home 800 workers, their largest hotel complex, even threatening the very threshold that they need to keep that hotel operating. Sandals has just sent home 610 workers across the Caribbean, 200 of which have been sent home in St. Lucia. At least in Barbados there has still been a commitment to jobs in the Tourism Sector and seeking to protect the interest of our citizens. That is not to say that there will not be challenges in the New Year that we together cannot sit down and work out. At least we have the history of the Social Partnership with us, and we can work on protecting our Barbadian jobs. That is all I can say, but I am not going to be reckless.

Sir, I am not going to allow anybody to draw me into reckless statements not based on the sustainability of certain policies by the Government. We are not going to throw good money after bad either. We are going to be sensible in how we spend it. We are not going to go in for any fancy projects which enrich a few people, particularly foreign operatives who come here and cream off the profits and then leave, either.

Our focus is going to be on Barbadian construction companies, on established businesses in this country, and on small businesses in Barbados to carry out our Public/Private Sector partnerships, including the Honourable Member for Christ Church West who is a construction magnate.

Everybody will get a piece of the pie, but we are not going to bring in any 3Ws, 3Rs or 3Fs to come here to cream off profits and do work that Barbadians can do. They are people who could have carried out all of those projects in Barbados, which the previous Government undertook, bringing in foreign operatives to do them, every single one of them.

We have had a history of people who can do that, and people in the Caribbean who can do it. They went into the United States of America and Alaska, of all places, the coldest and farthest reaches of the earth, to bring people here to build a prison for us. Then reaching and doing business with all kinds of people who have had corrupting influences throughout the Caribbean, in Jamaica and elsewhere, when they are Barbadians who can and have done that work before.

Sir, we are saying so. We think Barbadians understand what it is to go through an economic challenge, and we are going to work with our domestic business people and our Regional business people to undertake major projects and to ensure the protection of jobs in this country. That is all I can say at this time.

I want to disabuse anybody of the notion that there are attempts to crowd out the private sector. Government's growth in relation to its borrowing has been at an orderly pace, consistent with the economic conditions.

We have done nothing to place any additional pressure in relation to the market to mop up funds or do anything else at this stage. However, as circumstances change and adjust, we will make decisions that are in the best interest of all Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

The question that this Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ORDER NO. 4 – ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL,
2008

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, this is merely a very simple but necessary matter before this Honourable Chamber, to bring in line the Act with respect to the collection of driving licence fees charged and to bring into what was stated in the Budget of July 7, 2008, the Authority to make a driving licence valid for a period of one year, three years or five years and the related charges for the same periods of validity.

12.10 p.m.

Therefore, we are asking this Chamber to amend Section 76 of the Road Traffic Act by deleting Sub Section 1, and substituting the following, and I quote:

“Subject to Sub Section 2, unless previously suspended, cancelled or revoked, a driver's licence may be issued by the Licencing Authority for a period of one year, three years or five years, from the date of issue, may be renewed at the request of the holder for a further period of one year, three years or five years, and shall be issued or renewed in the month in which the holder was born, and on payment of such fees as the Minister responsible for Finance by order prescribes.”

Sir, that is the order of the Amendment and I move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, we have no objection to the enlarging of the legislation to allow for the flexibility, in terms of the licences. I think it is a good thing when we settle the framework for the new licences that was always within our contemplation. Therefore, we will not distance ourselves from the Government in relation to a policy that had its genesis with us.

Suffice it to say, however, that there is an issue that I am enquiring about. In the Prime Minister's Budget speech, he announced that there would no longer be refunds for persons who sold their vehicles and who would normally get the unexpired portion of their Road Tax for licencing their vehicles paid back to them as a refund.

Sir, if that is to be the case, then it would have to be facilitated by an amendment to the legislation. It cannot equally, in my view, fall under the provision of the collection of taxes in the legislation. I am sure that the Attorney-General would agree.

Therefore, one would have thought that the opportunity to make amendments to the Road Traffic Act today, would have also been used to give life to the policy announced by the Prime Minister. I fear that any person who has their Road Tax refund denied, would have a cause of action against the Government of Barbados, in the absence of the appropriate legislative support system. I therefore just bring that to the attention of the Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, maybe we will have an opportunity in the future to discuss the full details of the Road Traffic Amendment because there are still some details to come before this Chamber.

I move, Sir, that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. F. J. STUART: 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 Hon. F. J. STUART, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, seconded by the Hon. F. J. STUART, 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 the Hon. F. J. STUART, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, 2008.

ORDER NO. 8

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BORROWING UNDER THE SPECIAL LOANS ACT, CHAPTER 105 BY THE GOVERNMENT OF US\$35 MILLION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINANCING AND IMPLEMENTING THE SECOND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND CONTROL PROJECT

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

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to move the passing of a Resolution to approve, under the Special Loans Act, of \$35 million from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, otherwise known as the World Bank for the purpose of financing and implementing the second HIV/AIDS prevention and control project.

As you would recall, Mr. Speaker, we recently approved under the Special Loans Act, an increase of the amount that could be borrowed under that and, at that time, there were some concerns that once that amount is increased, this Honourable House would no longer hear about loans that are being taken by the Government. Suffice it to say that is not the case and, in the interest of transparency and good governance, we are here today to report to the House, this second HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project.

Mr. Speaker, on September 25 of this year, the Government of Barbados signed a sector investment loan of US\$35 million with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank, to co

finance this second Barbados HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project.

Sir, this Project is part of our National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control 2008-2013, which you would recall was debated in this House in June of this year. It also is for our behavioural change strategy. This Project will follow a sector wide approach and will seek to build on the successful increase in access to HIV/AIDS testing, treatment and care. We plan to expand the success that we had in the first Project into knowledge and effective sustainable behaviour change, Mr. Speaker, because we realise that there is a lot of information in Barbados.

The HIV/AIDS Commission and our partners in Government, our various Government agencies, our partners in the NGO and civil society, have all put our hands to the plough in educating the public and so, Barbadians young and old are aware of HIV & AIDS and many of them, from our recent survey, can tell you how HIV is contracted.

Sir, of concern to us, is that this has not translated into behaviour change, where many people know that HIV & AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease and that there are certain precautions that are necessary, if one is not to contract the disease or the virus during sexual activity.

12.20 p.m.

While it is known what action should be taken, the number of respondents who have replied that they are not taking those precautions is alarmingly low. Therefore, the object of this Project seeks to benefit the populations at higher risk and the general population.

Mr. Speaker, out of this project, we seek to increase the adoption of safe behaviours, especially among those key populations at higher risk. I refer to the young people, transactional sex workers and homosexuals among others. We also seek to increase the access to prevention, treatment and social care particularly for those same key populations at higher risk.

Another aim of this Project is to increase the capacity of the organisational institutional structures that governed the National Aids Programme and to be able to use quality data for programme identification, strategy definition and measuring the results. Barbados engaged in its first Project, which was successful, in June 2001. Barbados HIVAIDS Programme became the first project that was approved by the World Bank under a US\$155 million Multi-country AIDS Prevention and Control Adaptable Programme Loan. That programme did have a dramatic impact. The percentage of persons with HIVAIDS infections who were receiving treatment rose from 12 per cent to 80 per cent and the annual deaths from AIDS

related illnesses declined by more than 70 per cent. That is coming out of the first project that was launched in June 2001.

In that project, we were pleased to see again that our stakeholders, Government, non-governmental organisations and civil society, put their hands to the plough and we achieved remarkable results in that first project.

The World Bank stated that Barbados has proven the feasibility of providing sustained HIV care and treatment and has continued to provide key lessons for its neighbours and other countries. Sir, because of that, we qualified for this second loan.

Mr. Speaker, what we hope to accomplish out of this Project are certain performance indicators, and I would just outline those here. We want to see that the percentage of young people between 15-24 years old, who spontaneously indicate that sexual relations are a way of transmitting HIV remains at least at 90 per cent.

As I indicated just now, our research has shown us that because of work that has been done through the first project as well as other work done in Barbados, the level of education and information is high and so a high percentage of people will respond that they know that sexual activity is a way through which HIVAIDS is transmitted, and we want to maintain that level as one of our primary objectives.

We also wish to increase the percentage of sex workers who report the use of a condom with their most recent clients from 80 per cent this year to 95 per cent in 2013. We want to increase the percentage of men who have sex with men reporting the use of a condom the last time they had sex. I am not increasing the percentage of men who have sex with men. I am getting quizzical looks from my colleagues.

We want to increase the percentage of those respondents who report using a condom the last time they had sex from 65 per cent this year to at least 75 per cent at the end of the Project in 2013. It is a five-year project. We want to increase the percentage of young people aged 15 to 24 years who report the use of a condom the last time they had sex with a non-marital, non-cohabiting sexual partner from an alarmingly low 21 per cent in 2008 to at least 31 per cent in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, HIVAIDS has been categorised as not just a public health problem, but as a national disaster because of the ability that it has to wipe out entire populations. Another objective is to increase the number of people from key populations. I describe key populations at higher risk using the preventative services from 250 to 500 at the end of the Project.

We want to maintain the percentage of HIV positive pregnant women who receive a complete course of anti-retro-viral prophylaxis to reduce the risk of mother to child transmission above 96 per cent. We have had a high rate, 95 per cent this year and we want to keep that up there. In fact, Barbados has reported only one case of neonatal HIV infection recently. We want to maintain the percentage of people living with HIV on anti-retro-viral treatment achieving virological success in the last 12 months to maintain it at above 70 per cent during this Project.

We have had a lot of concerns recently about missing HIV positive persons. One of the aims of this project is to make sure that persons who have tested positive can have access to all levels of care that they need and certainly to maintain them on the anti-retroviral treatment and keep those figures high to above 70 per cent.

We also want to increase the funds that are disbursed to civil society organisations in this Project and to prepare a strategic plan. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we just presented the Strategic Plan 2008-2013. We want to be able to prepare the plan for 2013-2018 based on surveillance, monitoring and evaluation data that is gathered during that Project.

We have found that the behaviour change programmes need to be stepped up because not enough persons - I quoted a figure of 21 per cent - who even though they have access to the information of how they can contract the disease, are not doing the things they know they should be doing.

Mr. Speaker, there would be many interventions aimed at behaviour change during this Project. These will include peer communications, counselling, mass media and condom social marketing. High quality research would be conducted to determine the knowledge, attitudes and the practices of key populations at higher risk.

Mr. Speaker, given the nature of Barbados' HIVAIDS response, the behaviour change programme will require training and coordination of all our partners, including Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society, persons living with HIV, and the faith-based organisations.

Faith-based organisations have been key partners in our HIVAIDS response. We are glad that they have indicated again a willingness to continue to work alongside as well as on the National HIVAIDS Commission to help to bring this issue under control, especially as we have realised from a public health perspective, and given the limited resources that are available for dealing with HIVAIDS, has been identified that the best way to spend one's limited resources in dealing with this is to focus on sexual practices, particularly condom use.

The point was made by our researchers and key persons working with this that, given our culture, teaching abstinence and being faithful, are two of the three prongs of our attack on this disease, the A, B and C. As you would be aware, “A” is for abstinence, “B” for being faithful and “C” for condom use.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have put the emphasis of the funding on condom use because, from a public health perspective, it has been found that abstinence and being faithful have not been as effective from this end. Therefore, to that extent, we are glad that we have the faith-based organisations because we believe that more has to be done in promoting abstinence and being faithful.

The Church has had more success and, perhaps, will continue to have more success and we encourage them to work with us. Our other partners in Government that have come alongside us, would be the Ministries of Health; Education, and Human Resource Development; Tourism; Home Affairs; Community Development and Culture; Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development, as well as the Office of the Attorney-General and many civil society organisations.

We will be putting increased emphasis on building the capacity of these organisations, to work directly with vulnerable populations which are at higher risk. Many of these organisations get into the communities and work with the population. What is going to have to happen also is a social and attitudinal change. I mentioned abstinence and being faithful, but also some things that will require legislation, like stigma and discrimination, our attitude to transnational sex and multiple sexual partners. Those are things that we will have to work on.

Mr. Speaker, this Project is expected to last for five years. The loan for US\$35 million is to co-finance the Project. We are anticipating that we will have the success and even more so than we have had with the first Project. Everybody is rearing to go. We have our personnel in place in the HIV/AIDS Commission.

Sir, I would like again to congratulate them for the work they have been doing. I would like to congratulate our partners, particularly the Ministry of Health, for the work that has been done. The Ministry of Health has been doing work, especially in the areas of treatment, and control, and also volunteer counselling and testing. They have reported significant success. They go into workplaces, to national and public events and they do volunteer counselling and testing. They have reported that more than 95 per cent of people come back for their results. Therefore, the fact that more than 95 per cent of persons

return for their results, perhaps we think because of the level of counselling they have had, is to be congratulated.

I also want to urge those persons who return for their results, that when they do find out what are those results, especially if they are positive, to continue in the system. One person has suggested that, perhaps, they are going on to use alternative forms of treatment for the disease but, certainly, we do not have evidence to suggest that while alternative treatment might supplement the anti-retroviral therapy, there is no evidence to suggest that the alternative treatment by itself is the way to control the disease.

Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, would like to call on all partners who are hearing me, to assist us and to come on board. I would want them to embark on this Project which will redound to the benefit to all Barbadians, not just those who have tested positive, not just those with risky behaviours, but also all Barbadians, because this is a disease that if we do not contain it, it can decimate our population. It can also decimate our productivity capacity, our workforce. It is not a public health concern anymore. This is a socio-economic disease. This is something that affects all sectors of our society. Everyone can be touched and affected by it, even though they are not infected by it.

Mr. Speaker, we encourage those persons in faith-based organisations, civil societies, non-governmental organisations, and those who have been working with us in Government, to continue to work with us. Please come forward when we ask for your ideas, especially the young people. We need to work more with the young people because we need to get messages out that are targeted to the young people. Therefore, the only way we could develop messages that could reach them, would be if they could help us to develop those messages.

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

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.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended, to be resumed at 1:45 p.m.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without

division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.36 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to lend my support to this Resolution that speaks to US\$35 million from the World Bank for reconstruction and development for HIV/AIDS Commission.

Sir, I think it is a forward and mature step that the Government has taken, recognising that this is the second such loan to assist us with the education and the sensitisation of the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I waited eagerly to make my brief comments because I believe this whole HIV/AIDS pandemic goes beyond political boundaries. It has a serious social and economic impact, not to mention the emotional component that would affect the people of this country. Sir, indeed, beyond this country because there are people here living with HIV/AIDS, whose relatives are overseas and we know the kind of impact it would have on their psyche.

Mr. Speaker, I feel vindicated today because of some attacks I saw in the media, sometime in June, when we were looking at the policy for the HIV/AIDS Commission. I have every kind word to make about those persons who are heading the HIV/AIDS Commission, as well as the employees who are there.

Sir, this is coupled with the non-governmental organisations that are working with the HIV/AIDS Commission Department to ensure that the information is spread across the island and the necessary skills for counselling and other forms of guidance are pursued with a measure of vigour. It is extremely important that all the agencies come on board in respect of policing the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I had the distinguished privilege of attending the rally on the December 1. I was a little dissatisfied in that the Honourable Minister who was to give the feature address was not there, but I was heartened that the new HIV/AIDS Commission Director was present and that the Permanent Secretary in that agency was able to support me in a measure I had made mention of in June this year.

The Honourable Member spoke to the current Administration and I know the Honourable Member refers

to this Government, this current Administration's commitment to the promise of universal access, to treatment, prevention, care and support services for persons living with HIV/AIDS in the year 2010.

Mr. Speaker, I thought that was a bold step for this Government to have taken, in the light that when I spoke to the issue in June, I made mention of those persons living in Barbados, who are non-nationals and have been, not for two years or five years.

Sir, for the last 25 years, 30 years and even 40 years, we have had non-nationals in rural communities and thousands of them are living in urban communities, especially in Bridgetown, who at the time, did not seek to pursue having their status regularised.

1.50 p.m.

Some of them are persons working and contributing to the national purse. Some of them have families, properties and leading religious organisations, but did not successfully complete their requests for residential status necessary for them to continue to live here. I made the point, in essence, that those who are living among us, and carry the virus should be accommodated with all the health assistance that can be offered.

I say this because they are having children with Barbadians, both males and females, in this particular respect. Therefore, when the Columnist wrote about the social dislocation, even though that was within his right, I felt that it was really narrow-minded and short-sighted of that journalist not to look deeper into the whole issue because, at the end of the day, we know of the spiralling impact that the AID/HIV pandemic will have on Barbadians. Therefore, I still stick by my word that those who are living underground as a result of an understanding of what seems to be the policy of this Government, as well, that some non-nationals need not apply.

We have been hearing rumours that some of them go to the Immigration Department to have their status regularised but, on reaching downstairs, they are restrained somewhere to be taken to the airport, or given a couple days to go back home. I know that more people will go underground even if it is just a rumour, and we will have that definite impact in society where we cannot identify persons.

Sir, I remember, last week the doctor, who is responsible for that area, spoke about the 52 per cent of persons who have died between 2006/2007. The doctor also spoke about those possible 800 persons who cannot be located, who probably had the testing done but never returned to get the results. Therefore, if we bring them on board, I believe it would help to alleviate some of the fear

they may be experiencing, and if they come forward they may not be given the necessary treatment.

Sir, I recommend to this Government to give deeper thought into embracing these people to give them another lease on life, because I believe that a high percentage of those almost 800 persons, if they had the opportunity to come forward, knowing that they would not be deported since they were here from 1972 or 1985, would come forward and take advantage of the medication and various cocktails that will be offered to help them to extend their life, because, as I said, those 800 persons may have gone underground.

Sir, I also want to commend these agencies that volunteer their service. They do not do it for money. If you attend a funeral of a person who may have died of cancer or HIV/AIDS, the agencies may issue envelopes asking for a contribution. They also have their own special food bank for those persons living at the Elroy Centre, or wherever they are in the community, who will be able to get a helping hand towards a better quality life. I believe agencies of that nature should be highly commended for the excellent work and commitment in assisting those persons and families who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Sir, I know a number of Government officers who give their time. I also know that these non-governmental agencies fund a number of projects not only to ensure that food is available, but the educational component is approached in a very professional way to reduce the effect of scaring people from coming forward to be educated and to employ some of the methodologies expressed in their daily living.

I want to say how happy I am to have worked with some of these agencies. I think one of the most recent organising of those living in the communities, and when I saw them in their uniforms, polo shirts and so on, at a rally, I was heartened because this is not a project that has just started. I want it to continue and every parish, for that matter, would identify a community group that will lend its support in a voluntary way for the HIV/AIDS Commission, and those persons living with that disease.

Sir, there is a document, I believe it is a document that has already been laid in this Honourable House. It relates to the code of practice of HIV and life-threatening illnesses in the workplace, which has been approved by the Social Partners. I think this is extremely timely because we are aware of the stigmatisation that takes place in some workplaces as soon as persons assume that one is suffering from the HIV/AIDS virus.

There are times when persons are diabetic and they lose a lot of weight in a short period of time. Similarly, the same holds for persons who suffer with cancer. You can be

fat and in two weeks' time lose a lot of the weight depending on the reaction of that particular disease on your body. Therefore, a lot of us jump to conclusions and assume things.

Sir, we know of persons whose names have been called. We know of a time in Barbados when telephone lines were jammed because people were targetting an individual as having died of AIDS. This person is still alive and looks very well. I know of the kind of ostracisation that will take place as a result of rumour within the community and the island.

Sir, I want to highly commend those organisations that have lent the support through the Social Partnership for the practices and policies that should be instituted in the workplace.

Sir, I know of persons who are living with the virus who cry every day. They are treated as outcasts by relatives and friends. In the workplace they are treated less than human. In the Church some of them are very badly treated and in the general communities where they live. I believe that the Government has to have that commitment, and I suspect that certain components of the loan would treat to issues of that nature, where those persons can get a measure of support in respect to the illnesses they are suffering from.

I also believe that this Government must continue the policy that was set by the last Barbados Labour Party Administration of constructing housing to facilitate those who are suffering with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and this is very critical. Sir, when families abandon you, you are left to all the other scourges in the society.

I know there was a programme now inherited by this Government. All I want is the assurance from the Honourable Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, that those persons living in Barbados get that kind of helping hand for proper housing, to ensure that their lives are extended. In likewise fashion I would like the Honourable Member for St. James South to make that commitment. We are in this together. Therefore, I would like the Honourable Minister of Health to give us the assurance that cocktails will be offered to those persons who are living with HIV/AIDS whether they are Barbadians or non- nationals as the case maybe.

Sir, I want to encourage the Government to continue to pursue its efforts of changing the mind-set. We know a lot has been said about the use of condoms and about abstinence. These are all supported by us, but I believe there has to be further work to treat to the youth in this country. There are too many negative messages being sent to our children on the cell phone, Internet and other forms of telecommunication and the media that really critically

impact on the lives of our youth who are the future of this country.

2.00 p.m.

I support every venture that the Government institutes through the HIV/AIDS Commission for these young people to get a better understanding and appreciation to be developed of the HIV/AIDS and how it can impact on them in their youth and the destruction that it will cause, not only in the social and emotional way but, indeed, in an economic sphere as well.

I know that some of the aged, and I had seen an article on the weekend with an 82-year-old somewhere else in the world who tried the Viagra, but we know that some of our males, in particular - there are females as well - seem to be living longer and their sexual urges, perhaps, are extended longer than that of females. Therefore, I know that there are many males in our society, who are senior citizens, and are targetted by young girls. Of course, young females will target them because they have a good pension, or they may have some kind of inheritance and they want to have sex. There is nothing wrong with having sex, but it must be done in a manner that it does not cause the extension of the HIV/AIDS virus.

I believe that critical programmes must be put in place to target the senior citizens. All the activities that we see for the youth will not, in any way, touch those senior citizens. The stations that we are using, those senior citizens are not interested in, but there has to be special kinds of information packages to target those senior because you know as well as I do, Mr. Speaker, that they will hide up and not want to expose what is happening to them, and what they are doing, because they do not want their business on the road, as has been the case with many citizens.

Sir, citizens like their privacy but I believe that some programmes and literature have to be targeted towards those senior citizens who can be caught in a web, especially when the females start to flaunt themselves and make them really feel as though they are living again, even though some of them might be quite dead. We know, Sir, that those senior citizens are being targeted and are sexually active and, I believe, that the message must be sent to them in a different way to capture their attention and to encourage them to institute different lifestyles and, of course, the protection component must be very important.

As I said, Sir, I believe that this project and this US\$35 million will go a long way in helping to educate and encourage Barbadians to get on board and assist the Commission. I believe that the new management and Commission are extremely professional and the policies

and programmes of the Government will be pursued with vigour because at the end of the day, we are all Barbadians in the fight together to sustain life and, of course, to give our people a better quality life in the long run.

Therefore, I want to add my measure of support to the Government for this loan. I trust that more will be done within our communities, through the Parliamentarians, the Church leaders, the schools and other leaders in social organisations so that people understand that HIV/AIDS has no boundaries. It is not interested in class, colour, creed or social standing. HIV/AIDS will affect anyone of us and it can sometimes happen in the most simple way.

Therefore, I trust that the Government will continue to pursue it, knowing full well, as I said last time and I repeat it, that it was assigned to the Prime Minister's office in the last Administration, and a special commitment was made to the HIV/AIDS Department for the funding. I knew, and I speak from a background of knowledge and respect for the former Prime Minister when every time salary increases were given, he would put that amount to the HIV/AIDS Commission, because he had a special interest, as was the Cabinet of the day.

I believe that if we continue to do more and make more personal sacrifices as community leaders, as national leaders and chip in our five cents worth into the agencies that are working in the communities and at the national level, it would help to change that mind set, because people will understand that it is going to be affecting us from the ground, the middle and the top. Therefore, all of us are in this together, to change what has been happening to our people whom we want to continue to develop, because they are the only human resource components that we have. We have no natural resources in the way other countries have, but our people are important to our continued development.

I wish to commend my comments to this particular project and trust that the Government will be successful because at the end of the day, we are all one family. We are all one people, looking forward to the extension of our lives, and to be doing some productive activity for the upliftment of our country Barbados.

I wish to thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I had no intentions of speaking in this debate, so I am going to be brief. I am only responding to somewhat of a charge made by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Mr. Speaker, there was a programme by the last Administration, but when we looked at the progress of what happened under that programme, there is nothing to show. The fact is, the then Government of the day set aside resources to assist those persons who contracted the virus that these resources will be allocated to them to provide housing for them. Sir, on close examination and analysis of that programme, I cannot count five, six, or seven houses that were delivered to those persons who contracted that virus.

Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I know that we would not want to be exposing people's plights in this particular debate but I can say, Sir, through the Poverty Alleviation and Rural Development, St. Thomas has had four to five houses done over the last four to five years. There are more than five, I must confess. Sir, other constituencies would have had that kind of assistance.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member mentioned the Ministry of Housing programme for HIV/AIDS, but now she is speaking of Rural. I am now speaking about the specific Ministry, the Ministry of Housing, which has a particular programme for it, and I can tell you that again, as I said, in this House, rapid inactivity.

I am saying, Sir, that this Government is committed to the programme. We have now looked at that programme. We will refashion the programme and make sure that, at the end of the day, people who contracted this virus will benefit from the resources, and will actually have an experience of affordable housing by this Democratic Labour Party Administration, and this Minister of Housing. Sir, I just wanted to assure the former Minister of State in the Ministry of Education...

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I am saying to this Honourable House that it is this Government's commitment to maintain that programme and to ensure that shelter is provided for those persons affected by the virus.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important debate that is before this Honourable Chamber. In actual fact, the Government of Barbados is asking for a

\$35 million Supplementary to support a very serious health risk factor in Barbados, known as HIV/AIDS.

The fact of the matter is, Sir, that I would like to set this debate in the context and against the background of the Millennium Development Goals. Sir, I would seek the Chair's permission to quote extensively from the UNFPA Report and also to make this miniature booklet that I have in my hands, a document of this Honourable Chamber.

2.10 p.m.

Sir, I speak to the fact that in the year 2000, one hundred and eighty-nine United Nations Member States met at the Millennium Summit and adopted eight important goals and 18 targets to combat poverty, hunger, disease, discrimination against women, degradation of the land, illiteracy and obviously HIVAIDS.

Those 189 leaders from across this planet called earth also affirmed and made clear that they would spare no effort to free their fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty to which more than a billion people on this planet are currently subjected to.

We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want. That is a noble ideal, excellent laurels. We also resolved therefore to create an environment at the national and global levels alike which is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty and HIVAIDS by the year 2015.

This is the year 2008. We are talking about a commitment made by 189 world leaders in the year 2000 to half the incidences of HIVAIDS by the year 2015. The shocking report that is coming back to the Region and also to the United Nations is the fact that the majority of these countries that have committed themselves to this noble ideal will not meet the target that is set by the year 2015.

Sir, Barbados is on its way and is doing wonderful programmes at the community level. I would want to compliment some agencies here in Barbados that are really going all out to make sure that the HIVAIDS pandemic is restrained. Certainly, Barbados will meet its commitment to the Millennium Development Goal by the year 2015.

Sir, there is a certain degree of, I would say, psychological obstacles that lie in people's minds when we talk about the stigma and discrimination as it relates to persons with HIVAIDS, even in Barbados. We boast of our educational system as being one of the best and our awareness and sensitisation programmes as they relate to HIVAIDS, which is supposed to be one of the best in the

Region, yet we are still battling with a serious problem in Barbados as it relates to HIVAIDS.

Sir, a lot of it has to do with the attitude of the male ego and the macho image that is carved out in Barbados by society as a whole, and by some men. Sir, it seems that a certain degree of excitement reaches the minds of people within my age group, or even just five years younger, I would not disclose my age in this Honourable Chamber, and what you are finding now is that a high level of incidences of HIVAIDS is now prevalent in this age grouping. Sir, 40 and 50 year olds are highly sexually active. You would think that this grouping being far mature, would take the necessary safeguard against this deadly disease.

In addition, the Honourable Minister responsible for Family and Sports is a qualified doctor and she could easily speak of the impact of reproductive health and HIVAIDS. You cannot separate the two. This issue is a very serious issue. We could very well lost our way as it relates to the progress that we have made so far in Barbados as it relates to HIVAIDS.

We know that the pandemic is almost spiralling out of control in Sub Saharan Africa. Amazingly, the Caribbean is second to Sub Saharan Africa as it relates to HIVAIDS so we have to really start on reawakening the consciousness of our young people in particular.

Sir, with the introduction of the AIDS cocktail, a lot of young people believe that it is medicine prescribed to stop the spread of HIVAIDS, and many of them think that it is a cure because there are cases in communities across Barbados where infected persons, after using the cocktail, began to look even better than they were. There are a lot of myths in Barbados that needs to be clarified seriously about the HIVAIDS pandemic.

Additionally, I want to use this occasion to compliment the Community Development Division in Barbados that has embarked on a very serious campaign of informing, sensitising and bringing a serious awareness in the communities across Barbados about the HIVAIDS pandemic. There are persons in Barbados who I call the unsung heroes who every day, even as I speak, are traversing the communities of Barbados dealing with persons that are dramatically affected with the HIVAIDS pandemic. The Community Development Department launched a wonderful programme in the Glebe in St. George. I am sure that there are many other statutory programmes in the communities.

Mr. Chairman, if we are going to seriously effect change, and if we are going to seriously deal with the stigma and the discrimination as it relates to the HIVAIDS pandemic, then we have to reach what we could consider in

our minds the unreachable. We have to carry the message to every soccer competition, to every cricket tournament and to every home in Barbados.

We have to change lifestyles. We have to change people's way of behaviour. We have to deal with the stigma and the discrimination and not only talk about it. We have to be careful in the ads that we are using to promote HIVAIDS because sometimes it comes over to me as more sexually exciting than actually sending the message over.

You see a nice beautiful curvaceous girl and the fellows say she looks real, real good and the message is lost in the beauty of the poster. It might be an oxymoron, but the fact of the matter is, it is a reality, so you have to convince those sometimes young minds that this is a serious thing.

We have to sit down on the steps wherever these young boys and girls are. Even at the primary schools, we have to send the message right through. Therefore, I want to compliment the Community Development Department in their effort to bring about this kind of awareness as it relates to this deadly disease in Barbados.

I also want, on the Regional and international front, to congratulate the United Nations Population Fund in really coordinating programmes in the Region and Latin America to halt the spread of this deadly disease. I recently attended a meeting of Parliamentarians in Suriname. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas and Dame Billie Miller who is one of the leaders at the UNFTA, in fact, she is the head delegate as such, also attended that meeting.

The fact of the matter is that the islands across the Caribbean are very seriously enacting HIVAIDS programmes in the communities in a very positive way. The Prime Minister of Antigua was recently awarded by the United Nations for implementing proactive programmes in his country against HIVAIDS.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in Guyana, just outside of Bourda, they use billboards like they use in Barbados. Those billboards display the importance of HIV/AIDS. Mr. Speaker, it goes beyond that. In every cricket club around Bourda, in every community organisation, there are programmes that go hand-in-hand with the Sports and Cultural Programme.

Mr. Speaker, in Trinidad and Tobago, interestingly enough - and it is coming out soon from now - Carnival, which is normally held in February, there was a time when a Ggvernment of Trinidad and Tobago also implemented that when visitors arrived in Trinidad and Tobago for

Carnival, as they arrived at the airport to party, they were given a condom.

In Trinidad and Tobago, if you know the culture well, they call Carnival time the mating season. Therefore, if it is the mating season, we are talking about a situation where everybody is having fun and enjoyment and, therefore, everybody would be susceptible. Mr. Speaker, in Barbados, we have to continue along the line of prevention. Mr. Speaker, some may scoff at the idea, but it is difficult. When we talk about abstinence, are we simply talking about a wonderful phraseology that sounds good? Why do we not put it in the right way and say do not have sex, to abstain from sex until you are married?

The reality is that a report recently shows that children, even in Barbados, are having sex from as early as 10 years old. These are the issues that we have to address seriously because those children too are exposed.

Sir, four years ago, and I would like to see it happen again, we had a children's summit on HIV/AIDS in Barbados. It was subsequently held the following year in Trinidad and Tobago. Sir, if you had seen the number of children who attended these two Conferences, if you had read the reports emanating from the mouths of these children, it would have made some of you cry. Sir, children who were infected with and affected by this disease came and gave testimonies of their ordeals at that Summit.

Mr. Speaker, I would really love to see Barbados hosting the Third Summit on HIV/AIDS for children. Sir, we are living in a real world. When a child loses a parent as a result of HIV/AIDS, that child becomes orphaned. Sir, there are so many different areas that we have to look at.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude this intervention, I conclude it against a background of letting us keep it real. Let us continue our intervention processes and programmes in the communities because that is the heart of where to start.

In terms of the stigma and discrimination, we have to change the mind-set of some persons across Barbados, especially our young people. We have to continue to bring about the sensitisation and the awareness that is critically necessary at this point in time.

Barbados is the leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the English-speaking Caribbean, therefore, let us continue on that path. I believe that this loan should be supported in all its forms because it is vitally necessary to the social development and health fabric of this country. Therefore all Honourable Members that ate in this Chamber should support this initiative by the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, and all Honourable Members of this Chamber, I want to implore all of us, that as leaders, as social activists, as community practitioners, we have a serious responsibility to go back to our communities and enact programmes.

We also have a serious responsibility to work with the institutions that are there already, so that together we all could fight this pandemic. If we do not control it now, then it would certainly control us in the future. Sir, as we fight, we should let no obstacle be greater than the cause in the fight against this HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this Resolution for US\$35 million from the World Bank, to be used to assist Barbados in its fight in respect to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It would be remiss of me, as Minister of Health, not to add a few words to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I wish, at the very outset, to indicate the level of seriousness that must be deployed when dealing with this challenge of HIV/AIDS in Barbados, not just in this Honourable Chamber but, certainly, in the wider Barbadian setting.

Mr. Speaker, if I could bring to this Honourable Chamber some recent statistics that I saw. Since the start of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Barbados in 1984, some 3 408 persons have been diagnosed with HIV, and of these approximately 79 per cent, or over 2 700 persons, were also diagnosed with AIDS at the end of 2007. Of this amount, some 40 per cent, approximately 1 379 persons who were diagnosed during that period have died. Therefore, that means that once our statistics are correct - and I believe that they are - there are approximately just over 2 000 individuals in Barbados, who are living with the HIV virus at the end of December, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I think these statistics are quite relevant because they certainly point us to the indication of what is the manner of the beast with which we are dealing. It is not just the individuals who, unfortunately, have been struck with the HIV/AIDS virus, but it also reveals the untold damage and challenges that are foisted to their families and their loved one, in terms of caring for them and treating them, once they have been diagnosed.

We, in Barbados, cannot and must not bury our heads in the sand in respect of this illness and its consequential damage to us in terms of the social fabric of the society, as well as the economic cost to us as a people.

I would also say that in 2007, the most recent statistics I would have seen, I believe this was dealt with quite a bit in the last two weeks by the officers the in Ministry of Health in presenting their 2007 Surveillance Report to the public. This indicated that there were 163 new cases of HIV diagnosed in Barbados in 2007.

Sir, during this same time, there were 53 newly diagnosed AIDS cases and 50 HIV-related deaths. Sir, in all cases, what we have seen is a predominance for the male to be the ones who are mostly affected by this pandemic.

Sir, I hope that this Honourable Chamber and the wider Barbadian population would pay more attention to HIV/AIDS than we have been doing in the past, and to recognise that it is, certainly, afflicting a lot of our young men in particular, particularly in their reproductive age. That, certainly, is already having some toll on our level of productivity in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, of the 163 individuals diagnosed with HIV, 60.7 per cent were males and 39 per cent females. The number of male deaths more than doubled the number of female deaths, with 68 per cent deaths attributed to HIV being males and 32 per cent females. Sir, these statistics, certainly, point to what I consider to be a glowing, challenging and interesting trend, in respect of what has been happening with the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, for those who may be interested, and I wish to let the Honourable Chamber know, we are also challenged with the fact that a lot of these new diagnoses are occurring in the 30 to 49 age group. Of the cases diagnosed last year, some 33 per cent were individuals in the age group of 30 to 39 years old.

2.30 p.m.

Sir, a wise one could say we might not be talking about a high absolute number but, certainly, what is instructive here is that the HIV/AIDS virus is affecting a lot more of our 30 to 49 year-old individuals, and in the 40 years to a 49-years-age group it was certainly 26 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we see that in excess of 50 per cent of the individuals diagnosed with the HIV virus in the year 2007 were those between the ages of 30 and 49. This was instructive because it indicates to us, as planners and policy-makers, the direction in which we ought to be going, and where resources ought to be employed.

Mr. Speaker, this US\$35 million that we are agreeing to get from the World Bank is not the sum total of what is to be spent on our battle against HIV/AIDS in the next few years, because the overall estimated amount to be spent in this particular project is about US\$180 million

with the Barbados Government putting up the other \$110 million.

Sir, there is a specific programme aimed at prevention to a large extent. There is some focus along the way in terms of the treatment of HIV/AIDS sufferers, but the intention is to spend quite a bit of the resources on prevention. Sir, prevention is not just a matter to be dealt with exclusively by the Minister of Health, or the Minister of Family, Youth and Sports. Sir, each one of us, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael East is often noted to say, each one of us, in some form or fashion, is a community practitioner, a leader, whether you are a politician serving as a Member of Parliament, whether you are a candidate for the Opposition, whether it be your Church group, your faith-based group, your youth groups, whatever sporting activities there are, it is the duty of each one of us who hold some position of leadership to first arm ourselves with information in respect of this epidemic. What is HIV/AIDS? What are the causes and to, more or less, ensure that we enlighten those under our charge to this particular challenge.

Mr. Speaker, the onus is on each one of us, as parents, as fathers, as mothers, to talk to our children. There is much debate as to what age we should start talking about sex education in Barbados, but the reality is, we must not be like the proverbial ostriches and bury our heads in the sand. This health issue does not choose whether you are rich or poor, black or white, whether you live in the housing units or the heights. It does not choose like that. Therefore, the onus is on each and every one of us, no matter where we reside, or what our calling is in life, to get up and play a part in terms of educating ourselves, our family and community members about this epidemic.

Mr. Speaker, it does a lot of damage. As I have said at the very beginning, it is not just reflected in the absolute numbers of individuals, because one is often quick to say that only 3 500 Barbadians residing in Barbados have been struck by this in the last 13 years, but we need to translate that into what it is costing us as a Government, what it is costing this society to treat to those individuals. We need to translate that in terms of the damages it is causing to the family.

Mr. Speaker, every child who loses a father through the HIV/AIDS epidemic is going to be a burden in some form of a charge to the State. Each child who loses a mother is going to have a challenge growing up. Sir, it does not rest there. We have also seen the numbers in respect of those in excess of 60 years. We are also going to see some challenges in respect of the grandparents who are usually there to guide the young ones in the absence of the parents. Mr. Speaker, there are untold financial and human consequences to the onslaught of this epidemic, which we must all be aware of.

Mr. Speaker, from the perspectives of the Minister of Health, we too are very much involved in this matter. In fact, I indicated to the Honourable Member for St. George South, the Minister for Family, Youth and Sports, that I will shortly be calling on her office to ensure that there is increased dialogue between the HIV/AIDS Commission and the Minister of Health's HIV/AIDS Project.

We cannot have two Government agencies caught up in a battle in terms of prevention and treatment to HIV/AIDS and not having close dialogue and collaboration. This is a public health issue and, therefore, the battle must also be led from the Minister of Health in conjunction with the current Minister of Family, Youth and Sports and the HIV/AIDS Commission.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of money will be spent, and we wish to ensure that it is well managed and deployed to the areas where it could yield the best possible results for all Barbadians. Sir, as I have said at the beginning, this is a major battle we are fighting. We cannot and will not rest on our laurels. The numbers may not have been increasing exponentially but, certainly, there is enough there for us to remain very concerned about.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the quest for this Loan from the World Bank to aid us in this battle.

In closing, I wish to encourage all Honourable Members of this Honourable Chamber and all within earshot, to let us get our shoulders to the plough and ensure that we, in Barbados, win this battle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this proposal before this Honourable Chamber for the Government of Barbados to borrow US\$35 million from the World Bank to execute the second HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project of the Government.

Sir, I just want to say that I was a little surprised by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas when in her presentation today, she suggested that men may tend to be more sexually active longer or indeed, have greater sexual urges longer than females. Sir, I am really surprised to hear a female saying that. I am no psychologist or medical practitioner but I am saying that I believe in equality; equality of rights and equality of opportunities and I think it would be doing a disservice to the female gender to perpetuate any notion that females after menopause, or a

certain age, should shut down their sex drive and accept that they should be less sexually active than men.

Miss. C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I did say "may". I want not to say, in any way that women are not sexually active in their old age. I said that some men are longer with their urges. I speak from a background of what I know and what I hear but, Sir, that is not the gist of what I said.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that it is this Honourable Member's view that we should not be in any illusion to this, and accept and encourage females to be responsible in their sexuality but not to think that, by nature of their biological difference from men, that they should not be sexually active as they get older.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying this is some sort of phobia out there that suggests that if a female after a certain age still remains sexually active then it is immoral. It is this Honourable Member's view that nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we should be responsible in our sexual behaviour, but I do not think one should perpetuate the view that it is okay for a man to remain sexually active after a certain age, but not so for a female.

Mr. Speaker, in supporting this matter before this Honourable Chamber, I agree with those Members who have spoken before to indicate that this is a very serious issue which should be bipartisan. The reality is, as I understand it, that we should claim victory in the war, to date, against the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The statistics are not showing any tangible decline and, Sir, this is a reality. Therefore, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East mentioned, when you look at the fact that globally, this part of the world, the incidence of HIV/AIDS is among the highest outside of Sub Sahara Africa, therefore, we in this part of the world must be serious about our fight to control the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we must be very frank. Sir, sometimes members of the public, when it comes to areas of sexuality, are very reticent and very much afraid to speak frankly, and they talk about one being too graphic, but the realities are out there and we have to stand up as a nation and accept the realities, and address them head-on. If we are in a mode of denial, the problem will still be there facing us head-on as we awake each morning. In this vein, Mr. Speaker, I will be frank in this presentation.

For example, this Democratic Labour Party Government took a decision early on to dissociate ourselves from any position held by the last Government to distribute condoms in prison. Mr. Speaker, we stand with that proposal, and I expect that the Government officials who are engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS will accept that the Government has changed, and this is a new policy direction. Therefore, I would not expect that at conferences and seminars, we hear Government officials promoting the distribution of condoms in prison. This may have been on the cards for the last Government but not this Democratic Labour Party Government.

Sir, I agree that the issue of the spread of HIV/AIDS through homosexual practices must be addressed. One proposal I have, Mr. Speaker, is the provision of accommodation for prisoners. Perhaps, we have heard in recent years about the talk of having a minimum security prison to separate the hardened criminals from the first-time offenders and so on. This is an option that could effectively reduce the overcrowding at prison.

Mr. Speaker, it is within our economic means, that we can arrange the accommodation for prisoners to such an extent that there is one cell per inmate, because when you have overcrowding of cells then, clearly, you have a greater opportunity for homosexual practices to occur in prison. I understand that at Dodds, there are currently cells occupied by just one prisoner, but not in all cases.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying the issue of a minimum security prison at another location, perhaps, at the old Her Majesty's Prisons, could help to ensure that we have just one prisoner per cell, so that we do not need to go distributing condoms in prison, giving prisoners false security.

Mr. Speaker, I reiterate, adamantly, that condoms are not designed for anal sex. This aggressive intercourse can increase the likelihood of ruptures of the latex rubber condom, thereby rendering it ineffective in terms of controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS, so we have to be frank.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that in the promotion in the use of condoms, some people may get false security to think that: "Okay, I can continue to be promiscuous, have multiple sex partners, one after the other. Once I use a condom every time, all is well." We know that condoms can slip off and can burst.

Mr. Speaker, we are now hearing in recent weeks of persons in this field alerting the public to the fact that it is not just about buying any and every condom, but the condom must not be old, a condom that a store owner may have had in a hot room, because that latex rubber can break down in this tropical heat. These may be okay to be stored

at room temperature in a temperate country, but room temperature in the Tropics, as in Barbados, would be higher and the safety of that latex rubber condom would be in jeopardy.

Therefore, these persons are encouraging the public to make sure that you buy fresh condoms from a place that has a high turn-over, not some place that will sell one condom in many months, so you have these dry, rotting condoms in the stores. These are issues that we have to be frank about, Mr. Speaker, so that people do not think that one can just put on any and every condom, and one can be as promiscuous as one would want to be.

Mr. Speaker, I see men with condoms in the back pockets protruding so when they are sitting down all day, all that heat generating from the body and the external temperature, again, that condom is rendered ineffective. These are frank issues to be discussed.

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the reality. I have attended some Seminars recently, and the officials in the fight against HIV/AIDS infection are very concerned about the promiscuity of our young people, whether they are at a wet fete, a dry fete or whatever celebration out there.

We, in the Caribbean, have this in our culture. We like to party. We have all the various festivals, Crop Over, Oistins, Holetown, et cetera, which are good for our culture, but we know that in our culture, even in our climate, people dress in a fairly liberal manner, which many people would find sexually appealing. Therefore, this sexuality is rather prominent and so, we have to see the realities.

As I said, many of the officials involved in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS are concerned about the promiscuity of our young people at these venues. Sir, to this extent, there are real fears that some of these patrons actually may be engaged in open sex. Therefore, when you see people dancing closely, you may think it is just that, but you do not know what sort of sex is going on there.

There are the realities out there because of that influence of the media. You know you have Face Book, all aspects of the Internet and the cell phone technologies, where all sorts of phonographic material is being disseminated throughout the island.

Sir, once upon a time you had the control of the video shop or the bookstore prohibiting adult material to young people, or banning it altogether, but now with this multimedia, the use of the Internet, you have minors having access to this sort of sexually explicit material, which promotes two men having sex with a woman at one time, orgies and all sorts of graphic, immoral behaviour, thus contaminating the minds of our young people and

encouraging them to be promiscuous. I am saying that we should not just say give people a condom, but we must teach people to have a high sense of morality and to be responsible in our sexuality.

Mr. Speaker, I say therefore as the leaders in our country, in this Honourable Chamber here, and Members of the Legislature must be good role models. None of us are perfect. We are all sinners, but we say the Lord's Prayer often and we say: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil".

Mr. Speaker, I am calling upon all of us, as Honourable Members in this House, to be good examples to those young people and the public as a whole, which we lead.

Sir, I frown upon the view that a good politician is one who must be promiscuous. The more partners you have, the better "Don" you are, the more popular you are and, therefore, if you are somebody that says: "I am sticking to one partner", you are ostracised and seen as a nerd, irrelevant and silly.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying we must be responsible. The future generations out there are looking up to us as leaders of our country and we cannot be hypocrites. We cannot tell people to be responsible and stay with one woman, and then we feel that the more women we have as a man, or the more men we have as a woman, the better politician we are. Mr. Speaker, I am very frank about this, and we will be judged by the electorate out there.

Mr. Speaker, I go further. I am saying that this Honourable Member stands firmly of the view that we, as a country, should not promote homosexuality. I heard people declaring their assets in this Honourable Chamber and I am calling upon us to declare our sexuality, and this Honourable Member declares that he is 100 per cent man, a 100 per cent heterosexual. I do not think that we, as a country, should promote bisexuality or homosexuality. I am saying that all of us should come forward.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the electorate out there that when we, as politicians, go around asking for their votes, challenge us and say: "What are your views on homosexuality?" "Are you bisexual or heterosexual?"

2.50 p.m.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: ?

I am saying that the young people in our country have developed a code of ethics, even in their cultural music. They may go a bit far where you here this homophobia in the Dub music where they talk about, "Shot a batty boy" and that sort of thing.

I do not believe you should endanger people who may be homosexual. We, as a country, should not promote this. I am saying that those young people are very concerned. They do not generally support homosexual or bisexual behaviour, and I congratulate them for standing up to these high moral standards. Sir, we, as leaders in our country, must stand up and state our position.

Mr. Speaker, let me go further. The Ladymeade Reference Unit, (MRU), is within the City of Bridgetown, and I am very familiar with that area. A few days ago I was up there doing some campaigning. I am saying that the public at large knows the Ladymeade Reference Unit, where persons living with HIV can get the anti-retroviral cocktail drug to help them manage their condition. Since the members of the public are aware of this location, many of these persons who need to come forward for that treatment may be reluctant because they may be of the view that members of the public may see them going in and out of the Ladymeade Reference Unit and accuse them of being infected with HIV and, perhaps, discriminate against them.

Sir, one possible solution to this issue is - I do not know if it is feasible, but I am just putting it on the table - we, perhaps, can look at the feasibility of allowing private medical practitioners to prescribe these drugs in the same way the current Ladymeade Reference Unit does, so that members of the public can get those drugs free of cost, or should I say taxpayer-funded, however, in the privacy of the medical practitioner's office, so that there is less finger-pointing towards these persons when they go to a single venue, the Ladymeade Reference Unit. This is one practical example that could increase the extent to which people living with HIV can come forward and get the necessary anti-retroviral drug without victimisation and being victimised and identified by other members of the public as someone living with HIV. Sir, we can be very creative in this regard.

Sir, as I said, I promote the high moral ethics in terms of the way in which people live. I believe that we all should seek to get married to someone of the opposite sex and live happily ever after in a monogamous relationship. Sir, I am saying that before people get married, and they are engaging in sex, this is a moral issue.

Most religions believe that sex before marriage is a sin. I am saying that those people who engage in sex before marriage and are using condoms, must be properly informed about the correct usage of such devices, because it is not just a matter of buying one. Somebody has to teach you how to use it. I say frankly, at one of the seminars held a few weeks ago, I learned for the first time how to use a female condom. I had never seen one before.

The health professional of the Government stood up to adults. There were police officers and people from the teaching systems who had never seen female condoms before. Female condoms are new to the world, a few years old. I am sure that many of us would learn from such demonstrations. It requires dexterity, and if it is not used properly by the man, as it were, could actually miss the mark and then the condom is totally useless.

Sir, even the issue of some people using two condoms, a male condom and a female condom, that is not to be encouraged because that friction could cause the rupture of one of them. Indeed, two male condoms are even worse because that latex rubber would burst.

In fact, we are now hearing that the plastic material of which the female condom is made might be superior to that latex. These are options that a responsible country must present to the public for better results in terms of reducing the spread of the HIV virus.

In this World Bank Loan, I am looking forward to educators being aggressive, going into the community, educational institutions, tertiary particularly, Churches, and speaking frankly to educate the public because knowledge is power, and the lack of knowledge could render us really ignorant of the facts, and we might be perpetuating high-risk behaviour to the detriment of our society.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, I am just encouraging members of the public to buy into this issue of getting involved in the fight against the spread of HIV, because it is our business. We cannot say that we are not promiscuous. We are not engaging in high risk activity, so, therefore, we do not have to care about what other people are doing. We interact with people and when more become people-infected, then we can see this incident of HIV coming closer and closer to us, be it our relative or friends.

In closing, linked with the spread of HIV is the whole issue of drug abuse. The abuse of alcohol. I am talking about these cultural events where many young people abuse alcohol, marijuana and other mind-altering drugs. When under the influence, their judgment is limited, and there would do certain things that they would not have done normally.

Sir, I remember an Ad, which was carried a few years ago on television, where this young woman clearly had been drunk, or under the influence the night before. Her mother woke her up the next day and she was not sure what she had done the night before. This is reality and, therefore, we, again, as adults must be positive role models.

I do not want to see any politicians drunk or worse, because we must set the example to people out there, not just politicians, Church leaders, Heads of educational

institutions and business leaders. We must be role models. We must set the example to the younger generation because they are going to emulate what we do, so we must ensure that they emulate good practices.

Sir, with those few words, I totally support this Resolution.

I thank you.

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

Dr. the Hon. E.R. BYER-SUCKOO: Sir, I rise to wrap up this debate. In so doing I would like to thank my colleagues for their contributions, today, and for their support as we embark upon this second project, which as I outlined, really seeks to promote the adoption of safe behaviours, safe sexual practices particularly, especially among the key populations at higher risk and also seeking to improve the access to the treatment services and the social care. We heard that those persons who live with HIV/AIDS need the social support just as much as they need prescription medication. We are stepping up to provide more social services for them.

Sir, you would have heard that they need more housing and that is definitely being addressed. As I mentioned earlier, we are also seeking to improve the capacity of the agencies that deal with the problems of HIV/AIDS. This is an effort to promote our National Strategic Plan, which we discussed before, but it is more than addressing the problem of HIV/AIDS, the infection itself.

We also have to look at the root of the problem. The Strategic Plan speaks to addressing information that Government agencies and other relevant agencies have so that they can make decisions and the legislation that is necessary in dealing with HIV/AIDS, also the deep-seated socio cultural practices that we have in Barbados. Sir, stigma and discrimination have to be addressed, as we go forward in this battle.

3.00 p.m.

I want to call it a battle - as well as poverty, dependency and unmet needs that persons have that may sometimes cause them to be in a situation where they may need to use sex to bargain, and so may not be in a position to demand that proper sexual practices are in place. As we have mentioned once before in this Chamber, sometimes women out of desperation would do what they are asked to do for assistance, and would not be in a position to demand that a condom is used.

Mr. Chairman, I want to remind colleagues and Barbadians that HIVAIDS is not a homosexual disease. It is very much seen among the heterosexual population. Many people who have it may never have engaged in any sort of homosexual behaviour. We need to remember that as we deal with people, and even as we talk about HIVAIDS, we never know who we are talking to, and we cannot make assumptions about people.

Sir, one of the things that we have to do is to deal with the stigma and discrimination that surround the issue and really heighten the challenges that we face with HIVAIDS, and we are going to be doing that as part of this Project as well.

Sir, because there is a stigma that is attached to having the disease, there is a misconception that a person who has it may have engaged in homosexual activity. Sir, because of how our society views homosexual activity and persons who engage in that activity, it may prevent persons from coming for testing, from asking for the information that they so vitally need because they are afraid of what people would think of them, and from coming for the treatment. It is that stigma and that discrimination that would drive this disease underground.

When the concern was raised, as it was recently about persons who were tested positive being missing, one of the issues we have to look at is how do we, as a people, as policymakers, and as persons who are directly involved in the management, the care and treatment of persons with HIVAIDS, treat these people. Yes, we may do the right thing, but what does our body language, our mannerism, say to them? Are we projecting that kind of stigma and discrimination to them?

To that end, I would like to call on Parliamentarians - the call was made before - and other persons who lead in their community to have open and frank discussions in their community that would help to deal with the stigma and discrimination that are, as I said, posing a big challenge in dealing with HIVAIDS. If we lead groups in our communities, even our Branch Meetings, we could have discussions about HIVAIDS and about the discrimination and the stigma that we attach to it.

Sir, a stigma was attached to cancer as well, but we got rid of that and so people are more free to come forward for testing, for treatment and for care. We are leaders in our community and we have to lead it.

A lot of what I am talking about today is not just about legislation. It requires a paradigm shift. That is what we have to lead. We have to remember that persons living with HIVAIDS have their rights and we have to respect their rights. They have a right to treatment, to work and to equality. Their children also have a right to go to school.

In Barbados we feel that we are so religious that we dare not agree to the decriminalisation of homosexuality or to putting condoms in the Prison. Yes, it is a religious view. It is a moral view as well, but if we, as a people say that it would never happen in Barbados because we are so religious, I want to call on us now as the Christian society that we say we are, and even more so now that it is Christmas and the spirit of Christmas is in the air, to hold fast to those biblical principles of charity, compassion, understanding and forgiveness as we deal with persons who live with HIVAIDS, and their extended families who suffer just as much as they do.

We have seen it in our communities when persons who are affected or even after they died and are gone, their families have to suffer shame, discrimination and ostracism because we attach that to them. Therefore, I am calling on us to remember that whatever their diagnosis is, and however they got it, that they are human and are to be accorded the same human rights that we would expect to have accorded to us.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for supporting this, and beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

I thank you.

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

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, this brings us to the end of today's Sitting. I want to thank all Honourable Members who have participated in the debates. I therefore beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Friday, December 19, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the House do now adjourn until Friday, December 19, 2008 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

3.15 a.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

Q1. Minutes. The Speaker calls ‘The Minutes of Tuesday, December 8, 2008’, but the motion is to confirm the Minutes of ‘Tuesday, December 9, 2008’, the date of the previous Sitting. Printed as in the source.

Q2. Committee of Supply, Order No. 7. The Resolution grants ‘\$1 059 110’, yet the Heads listed under it are Head 15 ‘\$158 000’, Head 19 ‘\$150 000’ and Head 52 ‘\$1 051 110’, which together exceed that sum. Under Head 59 the Minister gives both ‘\$88 264’ and ‘\$88 624’, and Head 58 is shown as ‘\$109 760 00’. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Committee of Supply. Only Order No. 7 is headed, but the Chairman reports ‘the passing of three money Resolutions’; Heads 59, 58 and 55 follow without their own Order or Resolution headings, and Head 55 has no heading at all. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Committee of Supply, Head 52. The procedural sentence passing Head 52 is run into the seconder’s words. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 8, take-slip 2.50 p.m.. After the take-slip, Hon. P. M. T. Todd’s speech resumes under a new speech heading whose first words are only ‘?’. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 4. The heading reads ‘ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2008’, but the procedural note cites the measure passed as the ‘Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, 2008’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 16th December, 2008, with the Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair, and the Minutes of the previous Sitting were confirmed on the motion of Hon. J. D. E. Boyce. Hon. C. P. Sinckler, Member for St. Michael North West, made a Ministerial Statement on Constituency Councils: Cabinet had agreed a framework model, the draft Bill was at a very advanced stage, and from the first week of the New Year Phase One would begin with six pilot Councils in five zones, to be reviewed over three months

before the rest were launched. Standing Orders were then suspended.

The Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, moved the Resolution to approve the Judges Remuneration and Pensions (Conditions of Service and Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations, 2008, explaining that it had not been called with the other public service Resolutions the previous week; it was agreed to. In Committee of Supply, with Mr. S. A. Lashley in the Chair, the Prime Minister moved supplementary provision under Order No. 7, including \$158 000 under Head 15 for a vehicle and robing allowance for a new Court of Appeal Judge and sums under Head 52 for utilities and the automated tax administration system, mentioning a forensic investigation into incidents of fraud. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick moved Head 59 for staff costs; Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo moved Head 58 for utilities and the relocation of the Environmental Protection Department, after which Mr. R. C. Eastmond spoke at length on climate change and the need for a full Ministry of the Environment; and Hon. R. L. Sealy moved \$20 000 under Head 55 for acting allowances in the Ministry of Tourism. All the Heads were passed and the Resolutions were read and passed.

The Prime Minister moved the Resolution to raise the limit on Treasury Bills, Tax Reserve Certificates and Tax Refund Certificates to one billion dollars, noting that against the current limit of \$700 million the balance outstanding at 30th September, 2008 was \$698.8 million. Dr. W. F. Duguid warned of Government borrowing ‘crowding out’ private investors from the local market. The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, asked for the fiscal out-turn, the state of the foreign reserves and the unemployment figures, and noted that diesel was still \$1.99 against \$1.46 when the Estimates were laid. In reply the Prime Minister described the Government’s measures, including an extra \$10 million for the tourism budget, airlift talks and the restructuring of the Barbados Tourism Authority; his remarks drew a long series of points of order from Miss Mottley, who complained that he was imputing improper motives to her. The Resolution was agreed to.

Hon. J. D. E. Boyce moved the second reading of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2008, which amends section 76 of the Road Traffic Act so that a driver’s licence may be issued for one, three or five years, as announced in the Budget of 7th July, 2008. Miss Mottley did not object but asked how the Budget decision to end Road Tax refunds would be given legal effect, warning that persons refused a refund might have a cause of action. Clauses 1 and 2 were passed in Committee and the Bill was read a third time and passed.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo, Member for St. George South, moved Order No. 8, the Resolution to approve borrowing under the Special Loans Act of US\$35 million from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the Second HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project, the loan having been signed on 25th September, 2008 as part of the National Strategic Plan for 2008 to 2013. After the suspension, Miss C. Y. Forde supported it; Hon. M. A. Lashley responded on the Ministry of Housing's programme for persons affected by

HIV/AIDS; Mr. H. F. Lashley set the debate against the Millennium Development Goals; and Hon. D. O'N. Inniss and Hon. P. M. T. Todd also supported it, Mr. Todd stating that the country should not promote homosexuality. In reply the Minister said HIV/AIDS was not a homosexual disease and called on leaders to confront stigma and discrimination. The Resolution was agreed to, and on the motion of Mr. Boyce the House was adjourned until Friday, 19th December, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.