
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 26, 2008

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.12 a.m. on Tuesday, February 26, 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)

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.)

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

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, (Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport)

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, F.C.C.A., C.A. (Minister of Trade, industry and Commerce)

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

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

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE, Ed.D., M.Ed., B.A., 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 Empowerment and Urban Development)

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS, Dip., B.Sc., M.B.A.
(Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business)

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

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

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, February 12, 2008.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its Meeting of Tuesday, February 12, 2007, be confirmed subject to any omissions, corrections and/or observations.

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

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

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE
GOVERNOR-GENERAL

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE
GOVERNOR-GENERAL

19th February 2008

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I have the Honour to refer to Message No. 1/2008 from the Governor-General, His Excellency Sir Clifford Straughn GCMG, K.A., informing the House of Assembly of His Excellency's inability to perform his duties during the period 9th to 17th February 2008.

I have the further honour to inform the Honourable the House of Assembly of His Excellency's further absence from February 18th 2008 to 10th March 2008.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 29(1) (a) of the Constitution, I have taken the necessary oaths to perform the functions of the Office of Governor-General during His Excellency's further absence.

As the Honourable the House of Assembly has been adjourned until 26th February 2008, it will not be possible for the usual formal Message to be sent down to your Chamber.

Will you, therefore, please bring His Excellency's absence formally to the attention of the Honourable the House of Assembly when next it meets.

I have the honour to be,

Your faithfully,

Elliott Belgrave

Acting Governor-General

PRIVATE MEMBERS'S NOTICES

ORDER No. 1

RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE THRONE
SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE ACTING
GOVERNOR-GENERAL AND OF THE
DETERMINATION OF THE GOVERNMENT
TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS
REFERRED TO THEREIN

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: WHEREAS the Throne Speech of His Excellency the Acting Governor-General outlining the Government's Policies and Programmes for

this Parliamentary Session 2008-2013 was delivered on the 12th of February 2008;

AND WHEREAS it is the commitment of the Government to continue its programme of transformation of Barbados socially, culturally and economically;

AND WHEREAS it is the responsibility of Government working in conjunction with other social partners to effectively govern and uplift the people of Barbados;

AND WHEREAS the Government has as its highest priority the development of the potential and capacities of all Barbadians;

AND WHEREAS the Government has clearly articulated a clear path towards the achievement of national development;

AND WHEREAS the Government reasserts its commitment to regional harmony, development and prosperity within the context of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy;

AND WHEREAS the Government has integral to its mandate the fullest participation of the people of Barbados in all aspects of governance;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House take note of the speech of His Excellency and the determination of the Government to implement the various provisions therein;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Honourable House congratulates the Government for its foresight, focussed and developmental agenda and people-centred policies for this Parliamentary Session as outlined in the speech of His Excellency.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Trade Industry and Commerce, I have a large measure of responsibility for matters affecting the cost of living. I consider it very fitting therefore to centre my first intervention in this Hallowed Chamber on this matter of the cost of living. Today, I wish to share with the public what this Government has done since being elected to office and the strategic direction it is contemplating to grapple with this domestic challenge - indeed a regional and global challenge - of mitigating the cost of living impact of rising prices on essential consumer products, particularly food.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, most of the factors driving high prices in Barbados and throughout the region, are external in nature - recognising of course that

contributory domestic factors do exist. The most significant external factors exerting upward pressure on domestic prices are

(a) high and sustained international oil prices which have led not only to increased transportation costs but also to higher production costs for consumer items, whether produced locally or sourced from beyond our borders.

House A2 Sequence 2

10.20 a.m.

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Hon. E. GEORGE HUTSON: (B) The rising cost of raw materials, particularly those related to the food sector, such as grain and wheat, the consequences of which have been higher import bills for domestic manufacturers of feed and flour.

On the domestic front, there are also the tariffs and non-tariffs barriers which are intended to offer protection to some of our key and sensitive domestic industries. They can have the effect, however, of contributing to higher prices for the associated products. The structure and operations of the distributive sector set the structure and nature of tax on some consumer products and the broadening of the consumption patterns of Barbadians.

The above external and domestic process, dimensions of our commercial engagement, is indicative and not exhaustive. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Government of Barbados is fully committed, as is expressed in our Manifesto and as is reemphasised in the Throne Speech, to easing the cost of living on the public. We have, therefore, begun to identify those elements of the price of critical items that are within the discretion of Government to adjust downwards. This is an essential initiative in crafting a holistic strategy to accomplish the very important objective of moderating the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to indicate what we have done since assuming office, to deal with the very critical cost of living matters. A few weeks ago, Government responded to the development within the domestic feed industry, which threatened to cause an escalation in the price of feed to farmers, and which would have ultimately led to higher prices for poultry products. These products, as we all know, are a major source of protein to persons in this country.

Mr. Speaker, increases in the international price of grain, corn and soya beans, over the past two years, have led to a situation where the cost of imported grain to domestic feed manufacturers has increased by some \$1.3 million in the month of January. This increase cost resulted

in feed prices to local farmers rising by 23 cents per kilo, which would have led to increases in the price of poultry and dairy products.

Mr. Speaker, in order to cushion the impact of these increases on consumers, the Government intervened by providing a domestic support to farmers, to the amount of \$1.3 million. This support is short-termed in nature, to March 31, 2008. As a result, feed prices have been stabilised, not only to the benefit of farmers but also to the poultry consuming public. My good friends on the Other Side would have certainly benefited from this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to flour.

Asides.

Hon. E. GEORGE HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, over the past two week, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Commerce was engaged in discussions with ADM Mills, with regard to the very important food item, flour. These discussions had their origin in the escalating external price of wheat, which is used by the company to produce flour for the domestic market.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you an appreciation of the dimensions of this escalating external price movement as it relates to wheat. The US Wheat Associates reports that in October, 2007, the average price per metric ton of spring wheat was US\$305 on the world market. However, by the end of January, 2008, the price had moved to US\$928 per metric ton, an increase of US\$623 or 204 per cent. This has resulted in increased cost to ADM Mills Limited of approximately \$580 000 per month.

My Ministry has analysed the data and is satisfied that ADM (Barbados) Mills Limited and its US-based parent company have not been engaged in transfer pricing. In an effort to alleviate the impact of increase wheat cost on consumers, the Government will intervene to provide a price buffer of approximately \$580 000. Again, this measure is short-termed, to the end of the current financial year, March 2008. Through this domestic price support domestic mechanism, the price of flour on the domestic market will be stabilised in the short term.

Mr. Speaker, we have also had preliminary discussions with the Pine Hill Dairy on the increase price of imported powdered milk and the consequential impression this would have on the domestic price of milk, other than fresh milk. Manufactures have indicated and produced objective evidence that the international prices of essential raw materials have been increasing sharply, and that they were under substantial pressure to maintain existing prices, even during the last quarter of 2007.

Sir, to be charitable, I have interpreted their absorption of the pre-January 15, 2008, price increases as their contribution to the burden sharing, an expression of good corporate citizenship. Sir, the fact that it coincided with the pending General Election was purely coincidental.

Mr. Speaker, at present, the Government of Barbados is engaged in discussions with the distributive sector and other stakeholders. My Ministry, through the Department of Commerce and Consumers Affairs, is already engaged in collecting and analysing information on the cost structure of several consumer items, with the aim of identifying where Government could make appropriate adjustment to the tax component of price, informed by the consideration that it is important to ensure that Barbadians continue to enjoy the level of social amenities to which they are accustomed.

Mr. Speaker, a current strategy involves careful identification of instances where indirect taxes can be removed or reduced on certain essential products. In this connection, the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, in consultation with the relevant entities, is considering the application of this strategy to a revised basket of goods. The revised basket will include healthy products such as diabetic foods, foods manufactured for persons who suffer from hypertension, and certain foods for children.

The objective is to identify where Government could adjust the structures of duties, so that goods offering benefit to consumers are easily accessible and affordable. In addition, the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs is in the process of drafting a consumer education package, designed to inform Barbadians about the domestic cost of living implications of rising international prices in general, and the positive cost of living effect of living a healthy lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, addressing the problem of high prices at the domestic level also entails some regional considerations, given that the pressures of the rising cost of living transcend local boundaries and encompass our regional partners.

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Hon. E.G. HUTSON: also entails some regional considerations, given that the rising cost of living pressures transcend local boundaries and encompass our regional partners. To this end, a regional effort is in train to identify a common basket of goods from which the Common External Tariff can be recommended to the Counsel of Trade and Economic Development for removal. The common basket of goods will contain products that carry a

relatively high weight in the construction of the Consumer Price Index or indices of the various countries in the Caribbean (2) that can reasonably be substituted by the use of other products and that are not produced in any significant quantities in the region. This would definitely have a direct and immediate influence on price reduction.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to these initiatives, Government recognises that a medium term to long term strategy has to be developed. This is necessary since the current upward trend in prices of imported raw materials is forecasted to continue for some time. Sir, the long term strategy will, therefore, involve conducting a comprehensive study on and analysis of the domestic distributive sector. The main objective of this initiative will be to identify structures and conduct, which limit competition, encourage inefficiencies and facilitate vertical integration and transfer pricing, all of which can result in higher prices to domestic consumers. The Port is a critical dimension within the distributive sector. My ministry will, therefore, engage my counterpart at the Minister of Public Works and International Transport to develop an appropriate strategy aimed at improving the efficiency of this vital institution. The public is advised, however, that while Government is and will continue to be committed to lowering the cost of living, the reality is that Government has virtually no control over external inflationary factors. Therefore, it is essential to expect that some price increases will have to reach consumers, whether partially or wholly. However, you can be assured that this Government will export all the mitigating options to ensure that it faithfully abides to the Manifesto commitment to ease the burden of the cost of living on consumers particularly the most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, I am most obliged to you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – TO MOVE THAT THE HOUSE RESOLVE ITSELF INTO COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY TO CONSIDER THE GRANTS OF SUMS OF MONEY FOR THE SERVICE OF THIS ISLAND.

On the motion of Hon. R.D. JONES, seconded by Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, the House resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. Mr. S.A. LASHLEY, Chairman of Committee, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

RESOLUTION TO GRANT THE SUM OF \$182 239 FROM

THE CONSOLIDATED FUND AND TO PLACE IT AT THE DISPOSAL

OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPLEMENT THE

ESTIMATES 2007-2008 AS SHOWN IN THE

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES NO. 10 2007-2008

WHICH FORMS THE SCHEDULE TO THE RESOLUTION.

HEAD 20 - MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - \$40 239.

Hon. E.G. HUTSON: Mr. Chairman, during the financial year and into this final quarter, my ministry has had to meet unexpected expenditure because of the illness of the Permanent Secretary, which required that a substitute be paid, as well as the substantive holder of the post. The Permanent Secretary was on sick leave from the beginning of the final half of the year 2007 and did not return until the end of January 2008. Travel, telephone and entertainment make up a large part of the \$38 240 being requested under Subprogramme 7030, General Management and Coordination Services, Account Code 102, Other Personal Emoluments.

In addition, one clerical officer was promoted to act as weights and measures inspector for an extended period and another officer was paid in his place at a higher salary. Payment of salary to the watchman and payments of substitutes in general under come under this Subprogramme. Travel, telephone and entertainment for this last quarter January to March is as follows: Travel \$4

290; telephone \$657.00; entertainment \$8 772, a total of \$13 719. The remaining \$24 521 is required for payment of salaries of substitutes.

A2/10:40

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Hon. E .G. HUTSON: included under Subprogramme 07030, account code 103 represents 10.10 per cent of the total of \$19 792 being the portion which Government is required to pay in National Insurance contributions on behalf of employees.

Sir, I beg to move that Head 20 stand part.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: I beg to second that

The question that Head 20 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

HEAD 24

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

\$142 000

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

Hon. Dr. D.S. LOWE: Mr. Chairman, before I engage this Honourable Chamber in this matter, I would like take this opportunity to thank the good people of the constituency of Christ Church East for this opportunity to represent them in this Honourable Chamber. Mr. Chairman, the Supplementary before us is to provide funding, to cover the final quarter of this fiscal year and to supplement the cost in the areas of travel and utilities for three departments in my Ministry. First, the Welfare Department is requesting a sum of \$74 000 to supplement the cost of travel for those workers who must travel across the length and breadth of this country to provide needy services for elderly persons and others in the society, who benefit from the work of this department. In addition, Mr. Chairman, the event at Arch Cot, Brittons Hill, also placed additional travel requirements on the staff along with their regular responsibilities, while providing travel service to and from the site, counseling and other types of support services for the victims of this particular event. Mr. Chairman, therefore the Ministry is requesting an additional \$74 000 to supplement Programme 423, Personal Social Services Delivery Programme, subprogramme 0427, the Welfare Department.

Sir, we should also like to indicate that the National Disability Unit is requesting an additional \$18 000 for the purpose of supplementing travel cost for the staff. Sir, as you might imagine, in order for the Ministry and this department to provide the services necessary to ensure that the quality of life of disabled persons in our society is enhanced, we seek, in all ways, to ensure that the services needed, and in this particular case, travel services, are provided to the department. In like manner, we are asking this Honourable Chamber to consider the granting of \$18 000 to supplement the travel arrangements.

Sir, the final department this Ministry is Community Development. Sir, we are requesting an amount in the sum of \$50 000, which is intended to supplement the approved Estimates for the fiscal year 2007-2008, in respect of Head 24, under the Ministry of Social Transformation. Sir, Programme 422, Community Development Department. Sir, this is a Supplementary to liquidate the cost of utilities costs incurred.

Sir, again, we in this Government are committed to assuring all of the services necessary to carry out the mandate of these respective programmes, and ensuring that those persons who give dedicated service are also provided with all of the necessary amenities to carry out their duties.

Mr. I therefore beg that Head 24 stand part.

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

The question that Head 24 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. R.D. JONES seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee of Supply to His Honour Mr. SPEAKER and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motion of Hon. R.D. JONES, seconded by Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, the Resolution was read a first and second time and agreed to.

10.10 a.m.

S5

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House A2, Sequence 06, 10.50 a.m.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE THRONE SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE ACTING GOVERNOR-GENERAL AND OF THE DETERMINATION OF THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS – REFERRED TO THEREIN

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

Hon. S. LASHLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish first, Mr. Speaker, to record my sincere appreciation first to Almighty God for being here and having the privilege to speak in these distinguished Chambers and secondly, to the people of Christ Church West Central for having the confidence in me to electing me to these Chambers.

I also have the distinguished Honour, Mr. Speaker, in this the first business sitting of this Honourable House to lead debate with respect to the Throne Speech, which encapsulates the policies and programmes of this Government for at least the next five years in this country.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that those policies and programmes that have been announced can only be described as visionary, relevant and necessary at this point in our political and economic history. Mr. Speaker, those policies underlie and underpin the reality in Barbados that the question of fixing the economic, social, cultural and moral ills of our society cannot only be woven in economic jargon and political posturing but must be supported by positive, proactive policies, translated in the vision which has been informed particularly over the past six years, by the kind of dialogue that is necessary between the people and those who have been given the Honour to govern. This to my mind is the best way in which we can sum up the policies and programmes, outlined in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, more importantly are the policies and programmes outlined. There are in direct response to the kind of Barbados that has unfolded over at least the past 13 years. Sir, we have a number of carefully thought out well drafted initiatives, designed to put this country back to work again. I want to allude to many of these policies and to demonstrate very clearly that they have been perhaps the most progressive initiatives, which have been outlined in this country over the past two to three decades.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the issue pertaining to what is happening in our country, the crisis that has enveloped our families, the problems afflicting our youth, we recognise that already this Government has set a path of change by being very revolutionary, in putting in place already two very progressive ministries. I refer to the establishment of the Ministry of Family, Youth, Sports and

Environment and the Ministry of Social Care, Community Empowerment and Urban Development.

Mr. Speaker, clearly we have been visionary in that we recognise the problems affecting our young mothers, fathers, young men and women, boys and girls, which have caused them to some extent lose their way, and we need to put a structure in place very early in this administration to not only lead but to create the avenue by which they and we can find answers.

Mr. Speaker, when we speak of empowering our youth, we recognise that we need to not only speak of empowering our youth but we need to put practical initiatives to give them hope once again.

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives are boldly encapsulated in the Throne Speech where we have dared to dream again in this country. Sir, what we have done is to reach out and hold out a hand to our young men and women to show them that still in this country, they can have values of self help and that their initiatives will be matched by robust policy direction of this Government.

Sir, not only can we afford to talk of the abuse of illegal drugs, and alcohol and the fact that still along our streets and byways, we have young men and women who believe that is the safest haven for them, but what we have enshrined in the policy initiatives in the Throne Speech are initiatives in which we will look and solve the problems of illegal drugs, abuse and restoring respect to our various communities.

We have been bold, Mr. Speaker, to tackle very troublesome problems in relation to fiscal prudence in Barbados. Sir, why I say that the initiatives in the Throne Speech are so relevant is because we speak of maintaining a balanced Budget, but when we talk of maintaining a balanced Budget and ensuring that we will make allowance for small manageable fiscal deficits, that in no way removes the responsibility of this Government of creating employment and opportunities for our people.

Sir, it speaks to our mandate to correct improper spending and to curb the bad practices of run away expenditure and cost overruns, which we have seen unfolding right before our eyes in this country. Sir, we want simply to bring back a sense of responsibility and balance to our fiscal management of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I have great belief in the resilience of this Government to bring practical and meaningful solutions to bear...

House A2, Sequence 06, 11:00:14

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Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: I have great belief in the resilience of this Government to bring practical and meaningful solutions to bear on how we shape and move our country over the next couple of years.

When we talk of job creation, Mr. Speaker, and we examine the initiatives in the Throne Speech, we recognise that job creation is no longer a question of giving short-term political handouts. What we have crafted carefully are initiatives designed to bring back the entrepreneurial spirit among our people.

When we speak, Mr. Speaker, of the development of our capital markets and providing attractive investments and instruments to keep our capital at home, of increasing the availability of Government service and to decentralise the provision of Government service across Barbados, that in itself connects our mandate and vision to create jobs across Barbados.

We have outlined initiatives to develop town centres and to grapple with the serious problem which we have on our roads of congestion. What we see, Mr. Speaker, is the intertwining of policies that would bear results in a multifaceted way. We also would want to invite the private sector to come on board with us when we speak of introducing and promoting the concept of flexi time and flexi business hours. This is what this Throne Speech is all about.

The question of looking beyond Barbados and at how we are going to add meaning to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and what we have said quite clearly is that... The CARICOM Single Market and Economy has always found support within the bosom of this Democratic Labour Party Administration. What has been missing is the bringing along of our country with us as we deal with the various protocols within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy as restructured.

Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech, we speak of taking the CARICOM Single Market and Economy forward and of realising the dream of a CARICOM Single Market and Economy. Equally, we recognise that the dream of a CARICOM Single Market and Economy cannot be fulfilled and realised unless we embark on a wide-scale public education campaign.

We cannot have the dream of a CARICOM Single Market and Economy if we continue to have problems in relation to inter-regional travel. For example, LIAT cannot at this stage fulfil its mandate of more aggressively bringing our people together. We have to begin to reinvent ourselves and the concept of creating regional transportation mechanisms by ferries. The initiative already taken by us to explore that initiative with Trinidad and Tobago speaks of our determination to add meaning to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

One of the key concerns within the CARICOM Single Market and Economy has always been the question of the migration policies which have been previously pursued and the very real concerns of our people, particularly our workers, that they are in danger of being sidelined by the rapid movement of uncontrolled migration within our country. Again, we have said that we will pursue a policy, not designed in anyway to offend our obligations under the CARICOM Single Market and Economy but, to ensure that we could respond to the issues and concerns of our own workforce while at the same time ensuring that immigrant workers are not themselves targeted for exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, we went further and touched on a very important aspect of our social economic and political development. We are focussed and determined to look at the question of how we use our land. Again, in the Throne Speech we have outlined a number of initiatives in which we will remove this spectre which has been hitherto used where our lands have basically been left to market forces as it relates to the price of our land. We believe that has had a ricocheting effect in relation to agriculture and to the availability of land at reasonable prices for our citizens.

When we articulate the vision of introducing an Agricultural Protection Act in addition to making certain amendments to the Land Acquisition Act, they are encapsulated in terms of how we would grapple with serious land use issues.

We have always been a Government that cares. Therefore, we have outlined very carefully in the Throne Speech the initiatives designed to uplift and protect the vulnerable, particularly our senior citizens. From a position of policy, we have indicated, and we will ensure, that the 40 per cent rebate in relation to the senior citizens' pensions will continue.

Mr. Speaker, we will do more than that because we recognise that across Barbados there are a number of senior citizens who are vulnerable and who require the protection of the State particularly as it relates to care programmes. Mr. Speaker, these initiatives would be carried forward and explore.

Mr. Speaker, we have set for ourselves, within our Throne Speech, a number of targets which we recognise are important indicators of being serious about what we say. Not only have we said what we would do within that Throne Speech, but we have also set out targets. Sir, one such target I would like to outline in relation to tackling the serious problem of employment in our country has to do with the initiative of increasing the number of persons who are self-employed and who are engaged in entrepreneurial activity. I think this is a very important initiative, Mr. Speaker, because employment generation is perhaps the most burning and pressing issue affecting our people.

The reality on the ground in terms of the number of persons who are out of work does not in any way reflect what has been said before that our unemployment rate stands at seven per cent. I believe that when we look at the reality of the situation we would recognise that there is no way that our unemployment rate could be seven per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we want to increase the number of self-employed persons and entrepreneurs from 10 per cent of the working population to 20 per cent by the year 2016, again, a very robust initiative which we believe is necessary at this point in time.

We spent a lot of time looking at accountability and transparency in Government. As a matter of fact, we have stated very categorically where we stand in relation to the question of the lack of accountability and transparency that afflicted the last Administration. Mr. Speaker, not only have we made this an issue outside of these hallowed walls but we have put in place and have expressed policy initiatives within the Throne Speech that are designed to ensure that accountability and transparency become the order of the day once more.

House A2 Sequence 7

11.10 a.m.

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Mr. STEPHEN A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for moving with alacrity to ensure that the population of Barbados is kept informed by regular Cabinet Sessions, and that Barbadians are fully aware of those policies that have been agreed to. Mr. Speaker, I believe this initiative of regular briefings of Cabinet Sessions could only auger well, to ensure that we can be accountable to the people of Barbados.

We have also said and we have dreamed of taking Government closer to the people. We have indicated, very categorically, that the vision embarked on by our late great founder, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, somehow became interrupted, and that we will now take up

the baton of the late great Errol Walton Barrow and bring much meaningful relief as it relates to these measures.

Mr. Speaker, the question of state-funded constituency councils must be seen as a revolutionary initiative, designed particularly to ensure that accountability and transparency in public life become part and parcel of community reality.

Sir, it is important to note this because we need to tell Barbados and we need to join hands with Barbadians in recognising that we as Members of Parliament, who have been elected, do not have all the answers. We need to put and repose the confidence in the people to help us to solve these various problems at the community level.

Mr. Speaker, we have had a difficulty with the question of integrity, and within the Throne Speech we have made a solemn undertaking to put in place integrity legislation. That initiative, which up to now, while talked about in these hallow Chambers and outside, have not, for some reason, been embarked on. This Government will put in place integrity legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this is important to note. We have also said in the Throne Speech that we will look at rationalising the powers of the Prime Minister. This is a very laudable initiative. We have never had such before and for a Government to embark on the initiative of looking at the powers of the Prime Minister, with a view to rationalising them, can only be an indication that this is a Government that is confident in its own ability to respect good conventions and practices and to respect the rule of law in Barbados. But we go further, Mr. Speaker, we recognise that we cannot ensure the rapid development that is necessary in Barbados unless we look at a number of areas, including sport development across Barbados.

Sir, I am happy to be associated with initiatives that recognise that we have to look at holistic development of sports in our country and that we have to link that development to all the various pillars upon which we wish to have national development rest. Mr. Speaker, we have already embarked on ensuring that VAT is removed on the various sporting and training equipment. These are key initiatives to ensuring that we can have sport development again linked to national strategic planning.

Mr. Speaker, within the Throne Speech, we have also indicated that we will develop a sports development and strategic plan. These are laudable initiatives but again they are laudable initiatives that are linked to a vision which is captured within the Throne Speech.

Again, we could only move forward if we have new and bold initiatives in relation to social care in our country. Therefore, when we speak of welfare and of assisting the

most vulnerable in our community, we can no longer view that as a question of delivering patronage and giving handouts, with a view to somehow getting something back in the future. Therefore, gone will be the days when that would be the ethos upon which national planning proceeds.

Mr. Speaker, we have been bold to say in the Throne Speech that welfare, once given, must be seen as a human right to the most vulnerable. That is the epitome on which the policy initiatives that we have set out rest, where we view welfarism, not as a gimmick but as a human right.

Mr. Speaker, the question of ensuring that transportation is developed in accordance with prudent standards and effective planning across Barbados has been a big issue for most Barbadians. We suffer today because of poor communication network of roads. We suffer because of traffic congestion. Sir, I believe that if we had to put an economic cost to the kind of problems we have on our road, in relation to traffic congestion, if we were to embark on policies to solve these problems, not by necessarily dreaming of flyovers but by being very creative in how we solve our congestion problem on the road, we would certainly put a dent in terms of the cause and the cost of those problems.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, and I do not proposed that I would ever be able to touch on all of the initiatives which we have outlined in the Throne Speech, but it is important that we as a Parliament and as elected Members of the people, begin to see problem-solving nationally, not only as our own domain but that we will invite national participation in relation to solving the myriad of problems. Sir, we have attempted to ensure that we have captured the practical problems afflicting our country and we will put in place, in a very short time, viable solutions to these problems.

Mr. Speaker, I am ever obliged to you. I believe the policies set out in the Throne Speech are visionary and that they will ensure that we could develop in a more organised fashion. They would also ensure that as the elected representatives of the people, we would have a feel of the vibes and the views of the people, as we plan their development with them.

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

Hon. FREUNDEL J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir, and reserve the right to speak again.

The question was put and agreed to in the affirmative.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, the tradition of having Resolutions on Throne Speeches

delivered by His Excellency the Governor-General, is relatively a recent tradition in our Parliament, and on occasions governments, particularly governments that are new to office, will ensure that Resolutions are debated, to allow for persons who are new to Parliament, to be able to get their feet wet, to be able to have broad debate on the intent of the Throne Speech, and essentially to reenforce those things, which would have constituted both the Manifesto, as well as the electoral platform during the course of an election.

11.20 a.m.

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Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: It is in this context, Sir, that I treat the Resolution and the speech, which has just been delivered by the Honourable Member Christ Church West Central and, Sir, in accordance with the highest dignities and traditions of this House, I commend him for his speech, even if I cannot agree with the content of his speech. I say simply that the Throne Speech, as delivered by His Excellency, the Acting Governor-General reflects the desires of the Government. A simple read of the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party will show that there was not even a change in words in most instances as they wrote out the speech for His Excellency to read. Indeed, if you read both, you can see where both reflect the exact, same language.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with some of it because, in our judgement, as an Opposition, it really reflects, in totality, a range of unrealistic promises, combined with statements that are flattering to deceive and statements that do not reflect the accuracy of the situation, which they found. Perhaps, the curious coincidence of a ministerial statement being delivered this morning by the Honourable Member for St. James Central, the Honourable Minister of Commerce, reinforced this more than any thing else that I could otherwise say. A statement was delivered that reflects, in part, a determination to reinforce policy that was already settled by a Government of Barbados in November or early December of last, Cabinet settled on a basket of goods that related to health care issue, diabetes and other persons, such that they may benefit from the removal of tariffs as well as the reduction of tariffs in some instances, the reduction of VAT and the removal of VAT depending on the particular product and, indeed, it was even made public knowledge. I think it was the back page of the Nation-News in December that spoke to this. Sir, it is clearly, simply a repetition of what has already been done but, at the same time, we note with care his studious avoidance of the promise to remove VAT on electricity.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, you would have thought, that being the promise, which significantly distinguished the Government from the Opposition in the context of the campaign, which was run, that would have been the leading policy, which would have been trumped by the Minister of Commerce here this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I say that I expect these things. Perhaps what is a little more disappointing is the sudden discovery of the international environment within which we are functioning. When we were the Government and we said all along that we could not do certain things because the circumstances against which we were doing them in the international economy did not give us the flexibility to do it. Sir, both the Throne Speech, within the first two pages and indeed the first few paragraph of the Minister's statement this morning and all of a sudden, taking on the attributes of Columbus, and has suddenly discovered these things although all the information and media were available to them. If I were uncharitable, Mr. Speaker, I would say that it was a ruse to deceive but since I am not in an uncharitable mood today, I would lead people to draw their own conclusions on these matters.

Mr. Speaker, I say that it was riddled with contradictions. Sir, I am not an economist, I do not profess to be one but by the same token, I understand that you cannot have a balance budget while running a fiscal deficit. I wonder whether the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is just conveniently out of the Chamber because, he more than anyone else, profess to understand economics in the Chamber in the last term and I saw him cringed, sitting as I was in the same row as him, during the delivery of the Throne Speech when those words were delivered that the Government will run a balanced budget while carrying a fiscal deficit for developmental purposes.

Mr. Speaker, it says to me, in fairness to those who are there on the Front Bench and who are new that clearly there was not a review of the Throne Speech by the Cabinet of Barbados in any serious analytical way that would have caused those who ought to know better to exercise their judgement. I certainly do not believe that those who have been brought in for their technical expertise in the Other Place, would have wanted to associate themselves with the kind of language that would have caused one to doubt their professional and technical expertise. Sir, I simply say that these are the kinds of things that cause us concern and trouble.

Mr. Speaker, if it ended there, you might even say fine but it goes further. This Government has clearly demonstrated a commitment to want to tax old age pensioners in this country in the Throne Speech and in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party. I will read specifically from the Throne Speech at page 15:

“My Government will also increase the tax-free exemption threshold for pensioners receiving \$3 000 per month or less.”

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Barbados really cannot want to carry the tax-free exemption threshold for pensioners to \$36 000 because it would be reducing it from the \$40 000 at which it currently exists. Therefore, this Government that is professing to be so caring as its first formal act, is proposing to tax pensioners in this Government. Mr. Speaker, I say shame on them. Sir, it is clear to me that the Cabinet of Barbados never reviewed this Throne Speech with any analytical eye for detail but, Sir, it is easy to say things and to make things sound as if they are new.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the basket of goods already. Sir, it is a basket of goods that a Cabinet of Barbados has already approved but if they want to feel as though they have done it again, that is not a problem because they are entitled to feel as if it is something new. If we are talking seriously about dealing with cost of living then, apart from their promise of the removal of VAT on electricity, we would have expected to hear the Minister this morning address the very serious issue of oil prices, particularly since as a Government, we took a clear policy decision as to subsidies for a period of time, purely as a buffer in relation to oil prices but we have not heard a single statement from this Government in relation to what is their position in relation to oil prices given that during the course of the campaign oil prices went to \$100 and the differential between what you are actually charging the consumer at \$65 and what you are paying for oil at \$100 is now US\$35 per barrel. It is a serious that will determine what fiscal space this Government will have to be able to use measures to buffer the increases that, all of a sudden, they now accept come from the international economy but what is the space that remains in order for you to do it. In terms of the new suite of labour legislation, I say simply to the Minister of State in Labour that he has a pile of drafted bills there, most of which have been the subject of consultation and we expect that they would want to do their own consultation but it will not be difficult for him to bring them to this House because, indeed, all of the work, with the exception of maybe one, has been done and has been the subject of consultation between the employers, the private sector and the unions.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the excuses that will emanate, particularly from the mouth of people like the Minister of Housing because he will soon understand that the process of decision-making and consultation take a little longer that he would have the luxury of feeling when he was in Opposition.

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Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: ..the Minister of Housing, because he will soon understand that the process of decision making and consultation takes a little longer than he would have had the luxury of feeling, when he was in Opposition, and I therefore look forward with eagerness, particularly since he obviously does not understand the rudiments of the bureaucracy. I would like him, when he speaks in this debate, if not we would bring a formal Parliamentary question to answer whether he would have ensured that 26 or 15 people were brought on, I have heard both numbers, to the National Housing Corporation the week after he became the Minister, when there was no Board in place and, indeed, without the requisite permission.

Sir, I told him not to trouble me. Let me speak to the Throne Speech.

Asides.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the truth is, the first real Agenda of the Government in the Throne Speech was the abandonment of the hundred-day promise. That was the first Agenda, the hundred-day promise. Sir, all of sudden things which we heard, not just in the Manifesto, but also on platforms. Sir, we were told, as a country, that legal transfers would take place of the housing estates within a hundred days. We were told that, and we look forward eagerly on behalf of our constituents. Sir, by our mathematics the hundred days will come to an end on National Heroes Day, April 28, 2008, and there will be no better day upon which to judge the performance of this Government.

Sir, the first reference to the hundred days came when the current Prime Minister, as Leader of the Opposition, spoke about a rescue plan for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital within the first hundred days. I am not sure whether the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is aware of it. The public of Barbados was regaled to this. Then, of course, I assumed that the Honourable Attorney General is working busily in trying to allow them to meet their target of bringing the Agricultural Protection Bill to Parliament within a hundred days, such that there is a 2/3 majority, as required by both Houses of Parliament, to ensure that land is retained for agriculture. Sir, there is a further commitment in the Manifesto which did not find itself in the Throne Speech, that every change of use under the Town and Country Planning Department must come to Parliament for approval. Sir, that was suddenly omitted from the Throne Speech and we look forward to the Government indicating to us whether that is still their intention. Sir, I will not speak about the desirability of that

piece of legislation, simply to say that was the subject of a promise, a hundred-day promise, and we look forward to seeing it.

Sir, the truth is, the Throne Speech, as I said, ranges from one place to another, riddled with inaccuracies, flattering to deceive, and it talks about the establishment of a Home Ownership Revolving Fund. It does not say how much the capitalisation will be, in the Throne Speech. In the Manifesto it says \$40 million.

Sir, if you are going to give interest free mortgages to first-time public servants, out of a public service of 28 000 people, it means that only 150, at maximum, people will benefit, because \$40 million, divided into 5, if you are being generous, and most houses will cost two something and not 200. Sir, most houses cost more than that in the marketplace. Sir, at most, 200 public servants will benefit from this Home Ownership Revolving Fund.

Sir, just as the duty free cars for designated public servants, because first, in the reply to Budget last year it was for public servants, and we went across police, nurses and teachers. We are now being told designated public servants.

Rt. Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, on a point of order. Sir, I consider it very unfortunate within our very first day back into this Honourable House, that the Honourable Member should be washing so widely in a number of inaccuracies. The principal one just issued from her mouth regarding the Democratic Labour Party's position on the concession to public officers. It was always a limited concession from the time it was announced in the reply to the Budget, it was indicated that it was for certain designated public officers. Therefore, the Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House and purposely so. Sir, that is not the first example of it, but I thought I would draw that to your attention.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Sir.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to determine what the list of designated public service is. Sir, suffice it to say that when the matter was first raised in this Honourable Chamber, we were told police, nurses and teachers. Sir, if those are not designated public servants, I do not know what is, but the Government seems reluctant, all of a sudden, to bring clarity as to whom this list of designated public servants is.

Rt. Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member said that the Throne Speech limited it to designated public officers, but that when we first announced it, it was for all public officers. She is now trying to pull around the argument to say who are the designated officers. Sir, from the outset, the Honourable

Member for St. Michael North East sought to mislead the Honourable Member, by giving the impression that we promised it to all public officers, but when the Throne Speech was written it was limited to certain designated officers. I am saying that it was always the Government's intention, when in Opposition and when those pledges were made, that the concession would be for certain designated public officers, and the designations were given from the outset.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, we await the designation of these officers like the rest of the public servants of Barbados. Sir, there used to be a thing called the privileged pump under a previous Democratic Labour Party administration. Clearly, there is now to be something called a privileged public officer.

Asides.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member seems rattled. I could have understood if he was rattled because I had got to the part of my speech, when I was talking about transparency and accountability. I would have understood if he was rattled, because I would have echoed the statement already made by journalists in this country asking him if he could please explain to the public how all of a sudden a Prime Minister is now reflecting an ostentatiousness, by ensuring that he is engaging in conduct with a company with whom the Government has commercial relations, and with whom there ought to be an arms length relationship. I could understand if he was rattled because I said that he traveled on a private jet owned by CLICO three times in six days, not even a week. I could understand that. I could understand if he was rattled because - do not get me wrong, the issue is not his traveling on the jet. The issue is the commercial relationship that you have with an entity. Sir, for decades the Cabinet of Barbados has adhered to a simple principle that when somebody invites, as the Honourable Member for St. James South this evening will go to Wilton Park, that for the most part the Government and the Cabinet pay for you. We do not accept gifts in this country from people who want to do or have commercial relationships.

Rt. Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Sir, first of all it is a blatant untruth, for the Honourable Member to say to this Honourable Chamber that I traveled on a private jet belonging to a particular company three times in one week. That is a blatant untruth. Sir, a delegation from Barbados traveled to Trinidad and sought through the Jet Centre at the airport the use of a private ...

HA2

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Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, a delegation from Barbados travelled to Trinidad and Tobago and sought, through the Jet Centre at the Airport, the use of a private aircraft to do so, because it was an official visit. The Government of Barbados paid for the delegation's trip and the cost of that trip was similar to the cost that would have been paid for the same five persons, had they travelled on a regular commercial aircraft.

Sir, the Government of Trinidad asked if they could send a plane for the delegation but we in this Government felt that we can pay our own way, but since they were providing a Guard of Honour at a particular time, we decided that it would have been better for the entire delegation to travel together, and since there is a Jet Centre Service in Barbados we sought - like any other individual would be entitled to do - to use that service to transport the delegation, and to bring it back to Barbados. Sir, those are the facts.

Therefore, to indicate that somebody sent a jet for Ministers in Barbados to travel on official business, free...

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that the previous Government had a policy that once Members of Cabinet were travelling, the Government had to pay. I am saying that nobody on This Side, accepted any gift or freeness from any commercial entity in Barbados with which the Government does business, to travel to any country free, or a gift from any commercial enterprise. We paid our way. The particular aircraft that was made available was a six-seater aircraft. They were five persons on the delegation.

Sir, there are people who own private aircraft in Barbados that make those aircraft available in the downtime for normal commercial activities. The Members on That Side promoted that concept when they promoted the development of the Jet Centre in Barbados and big speeches were made in here, week after week by a former Minister of Tourism promoting that concept, and now that it is being used, the Honourable Member has said that there is no transparency or accountability.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope you are satisfied with the explanation. Indeed, I was wondering about the relevance of the whole discussion to the Throne Speech, so I would appreciate it if you would now move on with the debate.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I was speaking to transparency and accountability. I look forward

to the Prime Minister providing the details as to what was the cost paid. I also am aware that the landing fees in Trinidad for any such plane are in the vicinity of US\$3 000 to US\$5 000 which landing fees must be paid by the plane and, therefore, is already in excess of what LIAT would charge.

Sir, a LIAT flight to Trinidad is \$610, and \$610 x five, equals BDS\$3 000. Therefore, already, unless the company provided a subsidised cost to the Government in which case we have a further concern. Sir, I noticed that he studiously avoided that in his capacity of President of the Democratic Labour Party, he also enjoyed the benefit of the private plane, and in his capacity as a private individual as recently as this weekend, he also enjoyed the benefit of the private plane.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: The public has already spoken to that matter. The issue now is not the Barbados Labour Party's behaviour. The issue is that there is a new Prime Minister, who said that transparency and accountability will be his hallmarks. Mr. Speaker, he has established a relationship with a company who has a commercial relationship with the Government. Sir, in the circumstances, the reality is that we say it is improper to be accepting personally, politically or through Government in subsidised forms, any patronage or benefits from Clico. Mr. Speaker, we will watch, and we will bring this matter via a Parliamentary question.

Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that the Honourable Member - and I say this as I prepare to sit - did not get up to take me on, on the fact that they were proposing to tax pensioners, because the tax-free exemption for pensioners is \$40 000 and it is currently at \$36 000.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, and I am glad that the Honourable Member provided me with this opportunity. Sir, in correcting her attempt to mislead the House, this Government will take no action to alter any benefit that any Barbadian pensioner now enjoys, other than to improve that benefit. Sir, I give that undertaking from this Chamber now.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is gratifying for me to have the first acknowledgment of incompetence on the part of the Minister of Finance in this Chamber, because if the Minister of Finance does not know that the tax-free exceptions for pensioners in this country is at \$40 000, first in Manifesto and then in a Throne Speech to be read by no less a person than His Excellency the

Governor-General, then I say to you, God Help us with the stewardship of the financial affairs of this country.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. There is only one method by which the Tax on pensioners could be adjusted instantaneously. It would not be the Throne Speech. It would have to be by a financial statement. Sir, there has been no Financial Statement.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, the previous Throne Speech said the St. John Polyclinic would have been completed immediately.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Sir, that he should equate the matter of the stewardship of the Ministry of Finance with the completion of the St. John's Polyclinic, which he closed, says it all for us.

Mr. Speaker, we have watched the Government in the last few weeks. I, like the others, said that they must be given an opportunity to govern, but by the same token, I feel that they are taking a little too long to do things, and we are anxious.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I recognise that there have been a lot of tours. In most instances, the tours in fact reflect agreement with previous Government policy but such is the life of politics and Parliament in our country.

The Minister of Education and the Attorney-General spoke about the Forensic Centre. Sir, most of them have spoken with a degree of understanding that the policies for the most part, have been acceptable to them.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I say to you that I am concerned. There is nothing in this Throne Speech that is designed to fuel growth in this economy, and I say so with a level of concern. The truth is, Mr. Speaker, we know that it takes cash to care and unless you can facilitate and fuel growth in this economy, there will not be the maintenance of jobs.

In fact, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central has already questioned the unemployment figures. I trust and hope that is just the result of his newness to the Chamber, because those are the same advisors that this Government will have to rely on, and

they must remember that they are not on This Side but they are in Government now.

Hon. S. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is seeking to misrepresent and mislead the Chamber. The figures I questioned as unrealistic were the figures of the former administration, which were published. Sir, they are documents of this House.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: The figures used by the former administration, reflected the Third Quarter Unemployment Figures coming from the Ministry of Economic Affairs Statistical Services Department. It is not the Barbados Labour Party. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, these matters have to be appropriately contextualised.

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

Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Thank you, Sir.

Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I go further. Not only is there an absence of programmes and policies designed to fuel growth, but there is almost a cavalier approach to how, why and where these policies would be financed.

Mr. Speaker, we already know that the fiscal space is limited because of a difficult international economic environment. We already know, Mr. Speaker, that there are going to be challenges. What is clear to us is that you would either have to break the promises or break the Treasury. That is going to be the sum total of the programmes outlined in this Throne Speech.

I do not say it with any glee, Mr. Speaker, because I do not believe that there is going to be any benefit if you break the promises, and ultimately the social fabric of this country is going to be affected yet again, because would feel that politicians come purely for the sake of a ruse, tell them lies, knowing that they cannot be achieved and you are going to affect the quality of the social fabric of this country. Heaven forbid if you repeat the act of 1991 and you break the Treasury.

I say to you Mr. Speaker, that we are concerned. If I wanted to make it and to communicate it more effectively, perhaps most Barbadians would understand from the refrain in the calypso of last year that was very popular: "Bring drinks, somebody gine pay". That is the attitude that

has been reflected in this Throne Speech, promise everything, somebody would pay. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we fear that the people who would have to pay would be the taxpayers of Barbados as they did in the early 1990s.

I thank you, Sir, and I am obliged to you.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this Chamber to speak on the Throne Speech and to say from the outset that Barbadians need not worry about the Democratic Labour Party because as you know we have always delivered policies that have been criticised in the initial stages only in latter years for people to recognise the goodness of those speeches, promises and delivery.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that at the initial stages you would hear the same thing. What we are hearing today is exactly what we heard in the 1960s. Sir, five years after, when the actual delivery came, people recognise that the initial criticism was not justifiable. Sir, what you do not deal with is the criticism but the actual implementation.

Sir, this Party and this Government believe in proposals for the total society. There is no doubt that we would ensure that these proposals are in the interest of all and any errors that there is to be corrected will be corrected. Sir, if by chance the desires of the public are such that we would need to go back to the drawing board, we would do that. We have always listened to the voices of the people and we have always responded to the voices of the people. Sir, we will ensure that once the voices of the people are heard criticising, we will listen to those voices. We will do what we have to do. That has always been the history of the Democratic Labour Party and that tradition will continue.

Sir, one of the things people have to recognise is that this Throne Speech has recognised that land is an issue. Sir, it is very strange that the Opposition did not focus on the number of house spots that the Government would be providing. Sir, on this side, we have always argued that the problem in Barbados has to do with providing lots for people and not necessarily housing. Sir, we have always been prepared to provide a total picture, and when one looks at this Throne Speech, one would see that.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is an issue that has always been debated in this Parliament. We have always argued and would continue to argue that if the cost of living is externally influenced then we as a party and a Government has to find a way to deal with it. It is unfair of any Opposition to expect a new Party to be able to solve the problem of the cost of living in less than a month when that Party or Government could not solve it in 14 years.

The history of this Parliament, from as far back as 1994, would show that I have always maintained the point in these Chambers that the cost of living can only be dealt with when we recognise that the workers of Barbados are part of the isosceles triangle and that you cannot have an isosceles triangle where you deal with the private sector and the Government revenues and you ignore the workers of Barbados.

For 14 years, I have been trying to impress this point to the other side. It is only when it mushroomed and people recognise that the Government and the private sector were going away from the workers and the workers demonstrated in every survey that they have not had their fair share that the problem of the cost of living became a national problem to those who failed to listen.

Today, we can now understand better why the cost of living has always been a problem for the workers of Barbados because if you were to look at the Estimates of 1994 and 2007 and you do a comparison of Government's revenue, you would see that in 1994 Government's revenue were just over \$1 billion and today they are over \$2 billion which says that Government recognise that they had a need to deal with inflation for themselves and they double the intake from \$1 billion to \$2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the profits of the private sector, you would recognise when you do a comparison that the private sector was able to double their profit for that particular period which means that if you have an isosceles arrangement, you could not deal with the private sector and the public sector and leave out the workers of Barbados who have to turn the economy. That is why I have been accused of being anti-union.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, when one looks at the cost of living situation in Barbados, one would have to recognise that the workers of Barbados needed something. Sir, the mere fact that we came and spoke about a basket of goods, it means that the Opposition has ignored the point from the workers. Sir, a basket of goods cannot be the cost of living, a basket of goods is only part thereof.

Mr. Speaker, when people say that the concessions in this are wide-ranging, one could easily understand why they are wide-ranging because if you are taking a basket of goods, you must also have wide-ranging proposals to cushion the impact that occurs on poor people as far back as the 1990s.

Sir, today we have now arrived at a conclusion that should have been concluded as far back as the 1990s. We have ignored that the workers played a part. This Administration is now admitting that the previous Administration has made an error and this Throne Speech is attempting to correct that error and to include the real

people of Barbados to ensure that they too share in the benefits.

We have to understand, Sir, that in everything there is a need for fine-tuning. When you are in Opposition you sometimes believe that you could do anything possible but when you get in Government and you have a look at the Treasury and you recognise that the Treasury is not what you expected it to be, then you would need to pull back.

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12:00 noon

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, that is why we have always made the point that anybody could make the best possible promises in the world, while believing those promises to be correct but then, as that person sees the actual situation, they would not be able to continue on that same path because that person then would have to be objective and realistic and would have to deal with the issues that relate to the present situation.

Mr. Speaker, it would, therefore, be foolhardy for any new Government, while making promises and then acknowledging what is happening in the world, as has been stated by both side, that external forces are now influencing more so than ever, we now have to recognise that if external inflation is rising and is impacting on the revenue and foreign exchange of Government of Barbados, then we will also have to make changes. Sir, we will have to go back to the drawingboard to ensure that what we deliver to Barbadians would be realistic and that we would manage not only the revenues but the foreign reserves of the country, to ensure that we could develop a healthy relationship.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that as a new Government we have to ensure that we must learn from the past mistakes of others, and that we must put policies in place to ensure that we could develop and grow the economy of Barbados. We have to ensure that we do not create social problems within the society. We must ensure that in whatever we do that we look at society in total and that we create a social climate that allows everybody to want to be a part thereof. We must also ensure that the growth of the economy is such that every sector or group would be prepared to join hands in building the economy of Barbados.

Sir, it is no wonder that one of the most exciting things coming from the lips of Government is that Government will now be promoting the concept of community tourism. Sir, this now means that tourism would not only be for a too-few but would be for a wider

Barbados, so that grouping of persons would be acknowledged. It would mean that we would no longer hear coming from the mouth of the former Minister of Tourism that community tourism is foolishness and that we do not need tourists in this country who can only afford to spend \$20.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, we now have a situation where the present Minister of Tourism understands that previously when sugar was king that everybody was included and was able to produce. Therefore, now that tourism is king, we also have to find a concept where everybody would be included, not only as workers but that they too could take part in the critical stage of the development of the industry and that everybody could share in that development.

Mr. Speaker, I say to you that no written document can be accepted as 100 per cent. It is a belief that is proffered but when it is matched, any sensible person would make the change to suit. Sir, therefore, today we will have to look and see the things that have to be changed and I am sure that in the interest of the country these things will be changed.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, allow me to begin by expressing my sincerest gratitude to the constituents of St. Michael North West, for allowing me the privilege and honour to visit on this Honourable House as their Parliamentary representative. I am humbled by the confidence that they have reposed in me.

Mr. Speaker, one would hardly have imagined that a Throne Speech, which has been delivered by the Acting Governor-General, would have caused such great agony in the hearts and minds of the Honourable Members on the Other Side. Indeed, one would have hardly imagined that the kind of acrimony which the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East would have tried to create over aspects of that Throne Speech, would hardly have happened today. Indeed, I was of the distinct impression that after the first two points made by the Honourable Member, that the Honourable Member obviously ran out of constructive things to say and therefore decided to go in a different direction, which we would not have imagined would have happened today.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, and I think the first thing we have to get through the minds of supporters of the Barbados Labour Party, is that the people of Barbados have spoken clearly and resolutely on 15th January, 2008, and that Party no longer constitutes the Government of Barbados. The Other Side is having a difficulty in

accepting that but if the Honourable Members would open their eyes and look on this side, where they would have normally sat, they would see that new managers of the policies of the Government of Barbados have been installed and therefore it is about time that we get past that.

Mr. Speaker, let me say also that when one listens to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, one would hardly imagine that side formed the Government of Barbados for almost 14 years. Sir, I think the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central made the point, which was ably and eloquently supported by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, on the particular issue of the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, when this side was in Opposition, debates after debates, meetings after meetings, on the streets of Barbados, on the call-in programmes, in this Honourable Chamber, we were pleading with the then Government to recognise that there was a major issue of cost of living which was affecting ordinary Barbadians in this country. Sir, each of those pleas fell on deaf ears because the then administration believed that it was not their remit...

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Peter has found it convenient to go to the bathroom at this time, because the Honourable Member does not want to face the reality of the situation.

Sir, pleas were made by the then Honourable Members of the Opposition, by ordinary citizens of Barbados, about the burden and weight of the cost of living. Sir, those pleas fell on deaf ears, even right up to the dying days of the last administration, when in a flurry, in order to convince the electorate of Barbados that they were doing something about the cost of living, they rushed and put together a hodgepodge of policies to try to convince people in Barbados that they were doing something about the cost of living. In fact, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, in his capacity as Minister of Finance, gave instructions.

Sir, in working in collusion with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, as Minister of Economic Affairs, and the former representative for St. Michael North West - who has yet to resurface - instituted a statutory instrument to remove the Common External Tariff and other impositions on a basket of items which we have found in this Government to be inadequate to serve the needs of ordinary Barbadians, particularly when it comes to healthy foods and eating healthily.

12.10 p.m.

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Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: ...instituted a statutory instrument to remove the Common External Tariff and other impositions on a basket of items, which we have found in this Government inadequate to serve the needs of ordinary Barbadians, particularly when it comes to healthy food and healthy eating. The Honourable Member gave instructions and the Cabinet agreed and passed a statutory instrument in contravention of our commitments - the Honourable Member says that he is the greatest proponent of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy - in contravention of our commitments under the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. Sir, I, now as Minister of Foreign Trade, in collaboration with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce, have to clean up that mess because we went to CARICOM meeting and had it thrown in our faces. Sir, we will clean that up, it is about to be dealt with and we will deal with it properly. Sir, the issue is that they refused to act when they had the chance to act and the public of Barbados, the electorate, has spoken to the issue and said it would give us the opportunity. Sir, the Ministerial Statement which you hear from the Honourable Member for St. James Central is distinctly and clearly how this Government has and will continue to act in the interest of ordinary citizens in Barbados in terms of the cost of living. Sir, as I have said, there are other things that we have to do because we understand and appreciate that the industry structure in the distributive sectors of Barbados needs looking at. We are going to look at that within the bounds of the Fair Competition Act and other such policies as are necessary. Mr. Speaker, all of the discordant noises from quarters who seem to want to criticise in relation to what we are doing on the cost of living will go to waste.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I want to make is on the question of the fiscal deficit. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East tried to create a point out a non-point. If he read the Throne Speech at page 22, it says clearly that the Government of Barbados commits itself to the high priority of balancing the budget of Barbados. However, where necessary for the proper administration and development of the country, we will run small deficits. Sir, that does not negate a commitment to a balanced budget.

Asides.

Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, let me speak to the 100-day plan. There is no stepping back from the 100-day policy. It is forward ever, backwards never in relation to that plan. It is still the commitment and desire of this Government to implement those policies that we have identified in relation to the 100 days plan. The Honourable Member raised this issue about transfer of title in relation to the National Housing Corporation. Let me speak to this very clearly because in my constituency there are four National

Housing Corporation housing areas and I can give my constituents the solemn commitment that we will deliver on the promise to have those houses deliver to those persons who are eligible, that is, persons living in the National Housing Corporation units for 20 years or more. Sir, that is a commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I can also say that a unit has been established in the Office of the Prime Minister under the able leadership of the Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister who sits in the Other Place, to shepherd that 100 days plan to a successful conclusion so there is no stepping back from the 100-day plan, just as there is no stepping back from the establishment of the community councils to help in the orderly management of the affairs of Barbados at community level, which the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East conveniently overlooked.

Mr. Speaker, I can also say that we are in the process and a team is already working on getting those councils in place, working out the blue print for the operation and we will share that with the Opposition when we are ready to bring it to the wider public. They will have an opportunity to contribute it and I hope they do so in the spirit in which we expect them to it, cordially and with a view to bringing it to an orderly operation.

Mr. Speaker, I can also tell you that a governance unit has been established in the Office of the Prime Minister to examine the issues of the integrity legislation, transparency and accountability as well, something which became foreign to some of the other administrations we had in the country but, Sir, they would not want to discuss those issues in the day or in the night.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to make sure, when we put the integrity legislation in place that we can control and add codes of conduct on how parliamentarians, ministers and public officials in high office operate so that we would not have to have the unpleasant experience of another Bussa meeting in an election in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, without detaining this House and causing unnecessary rancour, allow me to say that it is a privilege to have the honour to speak before you. I want to give the public the assurance on behalf of this side that we will continue to work studiously on their behalf and to ensure that policies are implemented.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, all I would say is that we will commit ourselves to working on behalf of the people of Barbados; we will do the job that we were elected to do and we will ensure that development in Barbados continues.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member Christ Church West.

DR. W.F. DUGID: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to give my simple contribution to this debate. I am happy that I am being applauded by my colleagues from the previous session on the other side obviously recognising my great contributions of past and looking forward with abated breath to my contributions in the future and I will not disappoint at this time. I have heard the other members speak of their commitment to their constituencies. I did not disappoint the Barbados Labour Party and the people of Honourable Member Christ Church West and I will continue to represent them with the highest standard of representation to which they have become accustomed.

A2/12:20

Sequence 14

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Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, the debate today is to take note of the Throne Speech, delivered at the Opening of Parliament sometime ago. There are significant measures in that Throne Speech which we on this side have issues. Sir, the first one debated today, to follow on from the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, it is unfortunate that he did not actually read the Throne Speech, which he said was at Page 22. I refer to it because it was a matter which he very strenuously made in this Honourable House today. Sir, I will read it, because he did not take the time to read it.

“Fiscal prudence will be the hallmark of my Government. It will restore fiscal stability to the management of the affairs of Government. This objective is a central theme of good responsible governance. It is absolutely essential to the credibility and maintenance of a fixed exchange regime. Sir, because of this, my Government will give priority to achieving and maintaining a balanced budget, while allowing for small manageable fiscal deficits where necessary to facilitate the development of objectives of the country.”

Sir, clearly, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West had this in his mind, he got it wrong. He had it in his mind wrong because it does not say “however.” It says “while.” I will give you the definition of while, which means, one and at the same time. The two cannot exist together. You cannot have one, and at the same time a balanced budget, together with small fiscal deficits.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is misleading this Honourable House when, (1) he tried to change the Throne Speech when it was clear that you cannot have a balanced budget while carrying a fiscal receipt; (2) accept, like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has said, that there are certain errors in the Throne Speech and we would appreciate that the Democratic Labour Party would accept the error and recognise that some correction should be received; (3), the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central also referred to the legacy of Errol Barrow when he was against local Government having, in fact, rejected the Newton Report which recommended a modified local government instead. The Right Excellent Errol Barrow abolished local government, and now this current administration in this Throne Speech, wants to reintroduce a form of local government.

Sir, this document clearly shows to the people, the lack of experience of this current administration, and I would hope that they quickly get down to doing the people's business in a professional and expedient manner, as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition will continue to keep a watchful eye over the people's business as we move forward in this term.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you to be cognizant of the hour, and I will cut my speech short and give way to the Leader of the House.

12.30 p.m.

Sequence 15

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House A2, Sequence 16, 12.30 p.m.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that further consideration of the Resolution be postponed.

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

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

PAPERS

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Report of the Accountant General for the Financial Year 2006-2007.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government's Business for today's Sitting and I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, March 04, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, March 04, 2008 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

House A2, Sequence 16, 12.36 p.m.

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STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)

THOMPSON, Mr. D.J.H. (St. John)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

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

EDITORIAL QUERIES

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

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

Q2. Dates in the text. The source gives ‘Tuesday, February 12, 2007’ (12 February 2007 was a Monday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q3. Private Members’ Business, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, take-slip House A2, Sequence 11, 11.50 a.m.. The source carries Mr. Speaker’s two-minute warning, Miss Mottley’s ‘Thank you, Sir’ and her opening words ‘I go further...’ twice, either side of the take-slip. The fuller second copy is printed and the first (about 45 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q4. Private Members’ Business, Dr. W. F. Duguid, take-slip A2/12:20, Sequence 14. The sentence ‘this debate today is to take note of the Throne Speech delivered at the opening of Parliament some time ago’ appears before the take-slip and again at the start of the next take. The first copy (about 20 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q5. Private Members’ Business, Order No. 1. Immediately after Hon. F. J. Stuart seconds the Resolution, the source records ‘The question was put and agreed to in the affirmative’, before the debate begins with Miss Mottley; further consideration of the Resolution is later postponed. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Committee of Supply, Head 24. Mr. Chairman calls ‘The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central’, but the speech is labelled ‘Hon. Dr. D.S. LOWE’, who thanks the people of Christ Church East. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Private Members’ Notices and Resolution. The Resolution refers to ‘this Parliamentary Session 2008-2013’; the Proclamation at the previous Sitting spoke of the Parliament of 2008-2012. The notices are headed ‘PRIVATE MEMBERS’S NOTICES’, and the heading ‘MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL’ is printed twice. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Order No. 1, Committee of Supply. The procedural sentence reads ‘Mr. Mr. S.A. LASHLEY, Chairman of Committee’. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Speech labels. Dr. W. F. Duguid is labelled ‘DR. W.F. DUGID’ and then ‘Dr. W.F. DUGUID’; the Prime Minister is labelled both ‘Rt. Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON’ and ‘Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON’; and Mr. S. A. Lashley also appears as ‘Hon. S. LASHLEY’ and ‘Mr. STEPHEN A. LASHLEY’. Printed as in the source.

Q10. Take-slips, about 10.40-10.50 a.m.. A take-slip reading ‘HA2 10.10 a.m.’ (S5) comes after one reading ‘A2/10:40’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.12 a.m. on Tuesday, 26th February, 2008, with Mr. Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of 12th February, 2008 were confirmed on the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones, seconded by Dr. D. C. Estwick. A letter of 19th February from the Acting Governor-General, Elliott Belgrave, informed the House of the Governor-General’s further absence from 18th February to 10th March, 2008. Mr. S. A. Lashley gave notice of a Resolution to take note of the Throne Speech.

In a Ministerial Statement, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce, Hon. E. G. Hutson, said that most of the factors driving prices up were external. He reported that spring wheat had averaged US\$305 a metric ton on the world market in October 2007, that the Ministry was satisfied that ADM (Barbados) Mills Limited had not engaged in transfer pricing, and that the Government would provide a price buffer of about \$580 000 on flour to the end of March 2008. He referred to discussions with the Pine Hill Dairy on powdered milk and a regional effort to agree a common basket of goods for removal of the Common External Tariff.

After Standing Orders were suspended, the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. S. A. Lashley in the Chair, on the Resolution to grant \$182 239 under Supplementary Estimates No. 10 2007-2008. Mr. Hutson explained the \$40 239 under Head 20, arising chiefly from the illness of the Permanent Secretary and acting appointments, and Hon. Dr. D. S. Lowe the \$142 000 under Head 24, Ministry of Social Transformation, including \$18 000 for the National Disability Unit and \$50 000 for Community Development. Both Heads stood part and the Resolution was agreed to.

Under Private Members’ Business, Mr. S. A. Lashley, the Member for Christ Church West Central,

moved the Resolution to take note of the Throne Speech, describing its policies as visionary, relevant and necessary, and speaking of job creation, taking Government closer to the people and transport; Hon. F. J. Stuart seconded. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley argued that the first real agenda of the Speech was the abandonment of the hundred-day promise, that it was riddled with contradictions on a balanced budget and a fiscal deficit, and that it contained nothing to fuel growth. The Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, rose repeatedly on points of order, denying that he had travelled on a private jet three times in a week and explaining that the Government had paid for the use of an aircraft for an official visit to Trinidad and Tobago; Mr. Speaker questioned the relevance of the exchange. Miss Mottley put a LIAT fare at \$610 and spoke of the \$40 000 tax-free exemption for pensioners, and Mr. Lashley rose on a point of order over unemployment figures.

Mr. D. St.E. Kellman said that critics had said the same in the 1960s and that no written document could be accepted as 100 per cent. Hon. C. P. Sinckler, the Member for St. Michael North West, said that the people had spoken on 15th January, 2008, and referred to the Throne Speech's commitment on the fiscal deficit at page 22. Dr. W. F. Duguid, the Member for Christ Church West, quoted the passage on fiscal prudence and argued that a balanced budget could not exist together with small fiscal deficits, before cutting his speech short because of the hour.

Further consideration of the Resolution was postponed on the motion of Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Stuart. Mr. Jones laid the Report of the Accountant General for the Financial Year 2006-2007, and the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 4th March, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.